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X-MEN®
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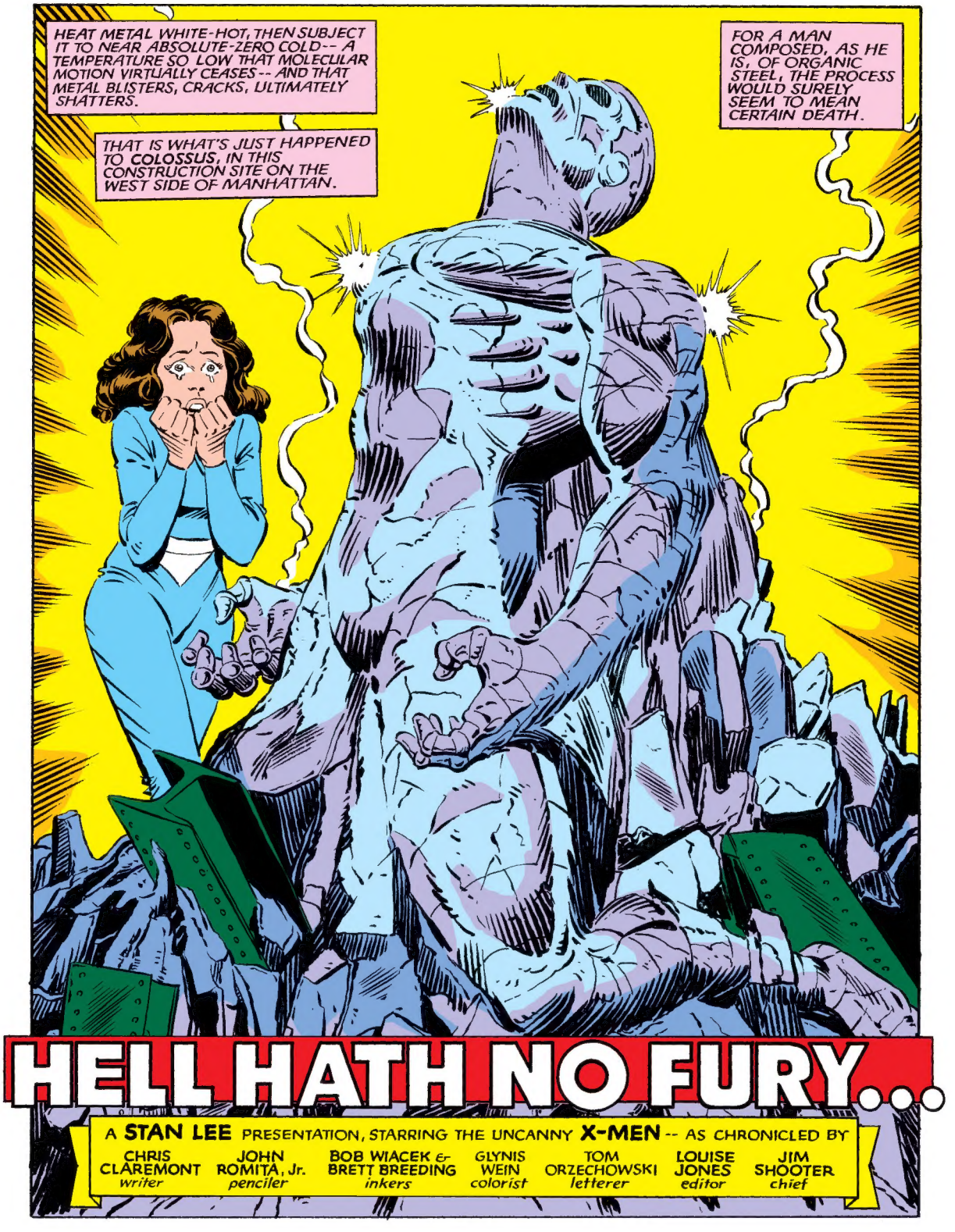

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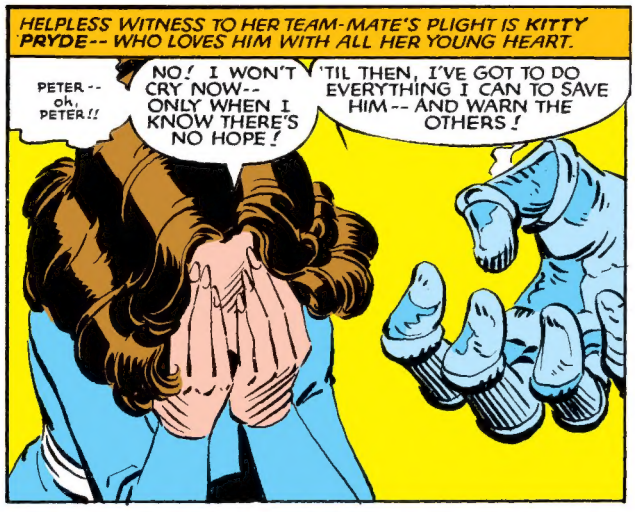
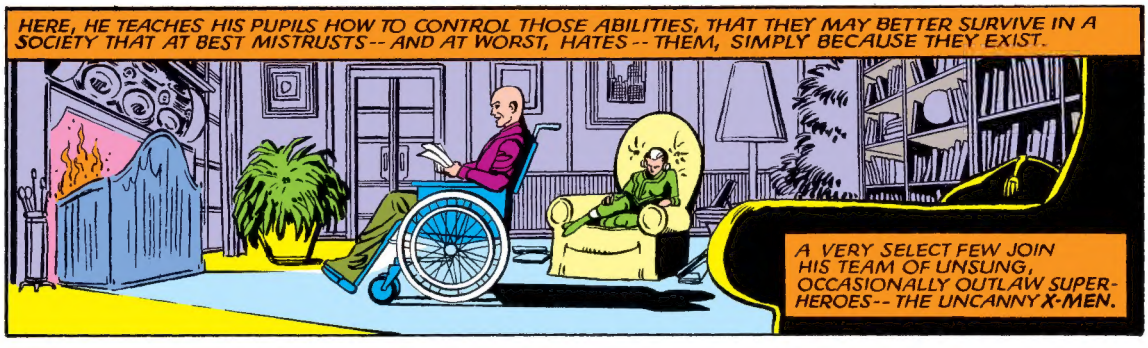
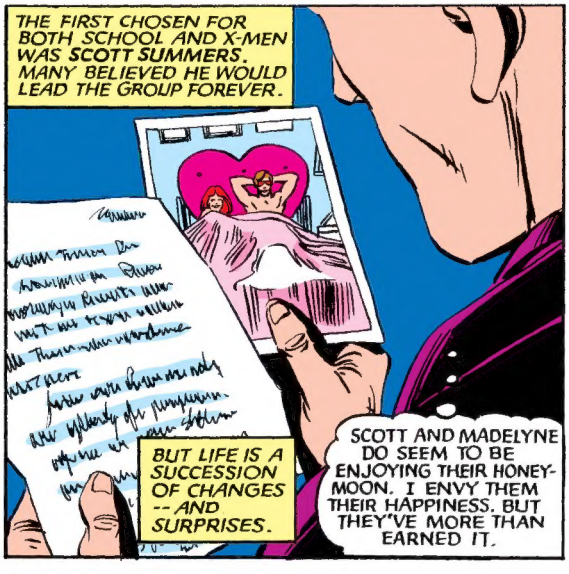

HELPLESS WITNESS TO HER TEAM-MATE'S PLIGHT IS KITTY PRYDE-- WHO LOVES HIM WITH ALL HER YOUNG HEART.
PETER-- oh, PETER!!
NO! I WON'T CRY NOW-- ONLY WHEN I KNOW THERE'S NO HOPE!
'TIL THEN, I'VE GOT TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO SAVE HIM-- AND WARN THE OTHERS!

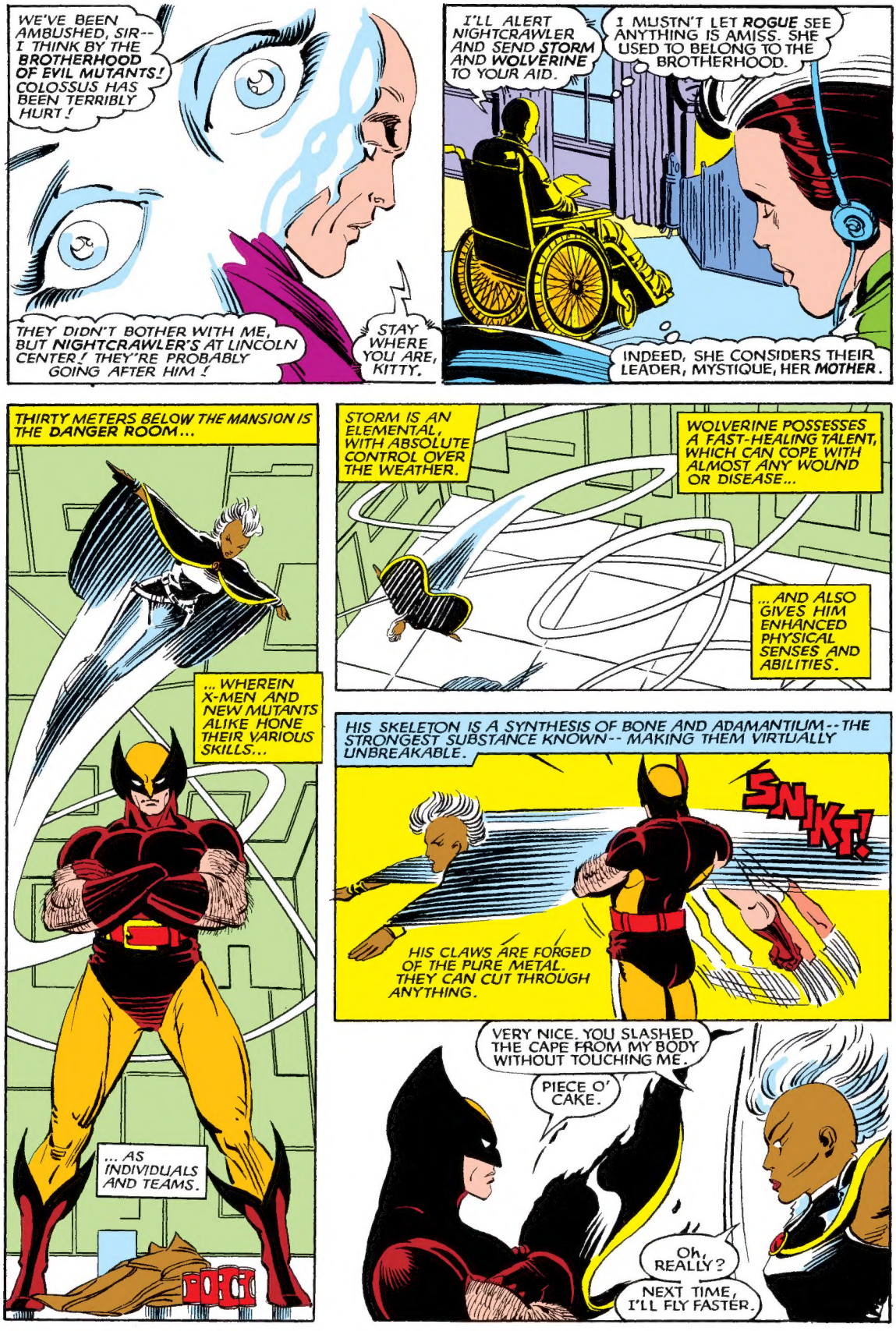
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- PLEASE HEAR ME!

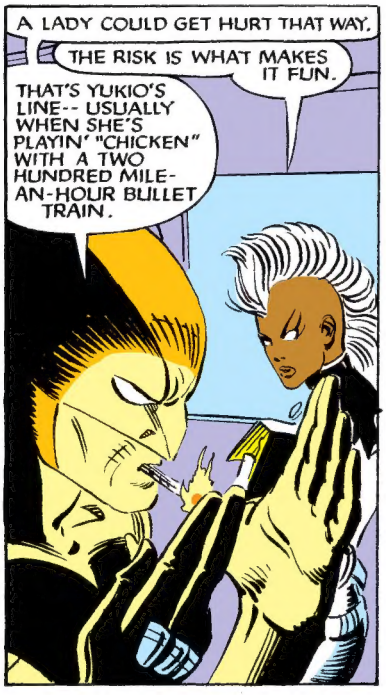
SOME FORTY MILES UPSTATE, NEAR THE SUBURBAN TOWNSHIP OF SALEM CENTER, IS PROF. CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
XAVIER, LIKE ALL HIS STUDENTS, IS A MUTANT-- AND THE "GIFTS" REFERRED TO ARE THEIR EXTRAORDINARY, PARA-HUMAN POWERS.


HERE, HE TEACHES HIS PUPILS HOW TO CONTROL THOSE ABILITIES, THAT THEY MAY BETTER SURVIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT AT BEST MISTRUSTS-- AND AT WORST, HATES-- THEM, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY EXIST.
A VERY SELECT FEW JOIN HIS TEAM OF UNSUNG, OCCASIONALLY OUTLAW SUPER-HEROES-- THE UNCANNY X-MEN.

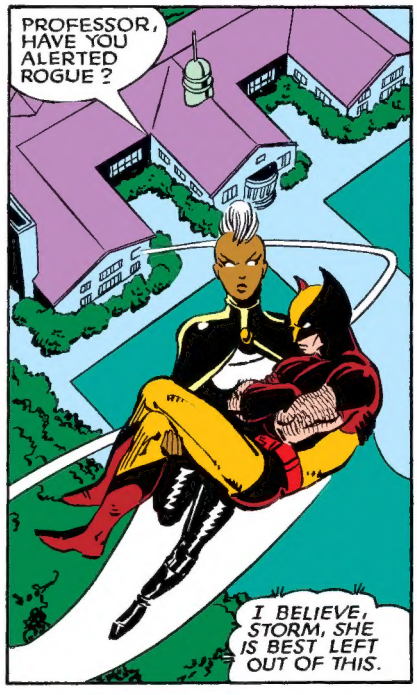

THE FIRST CHOSEN FOR BOTH SCHOOL AND X-MEN WAS SCOTT SUMMERS. MANY BELIEVED HE WOULD LEAD THE GROUP FOREVER.
BUT LIFE IS A SUCCESSION OF CHANGES -- AND SURPRISES.
SCOTT AND MADELYNE DO SEEM TO BE ENJOYING THEIR HONEYMOON. I ENVY THEM THEIR HAPPINESS. BUT THEY'VE MORE THAN EARNED IT.

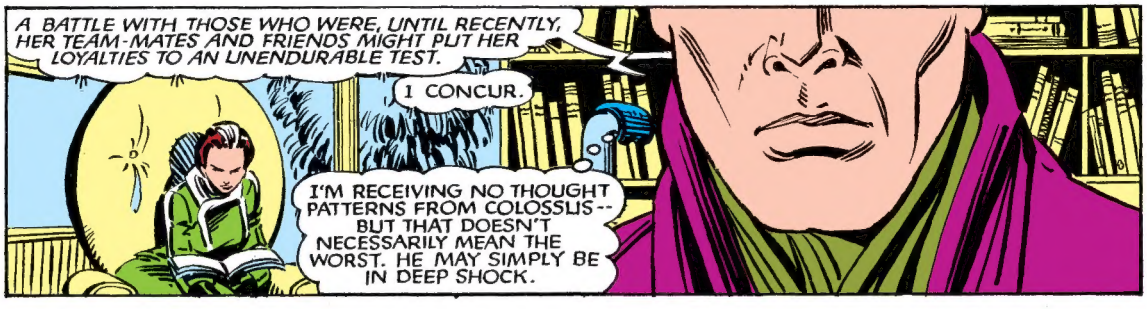
HE WRITES OF JOINING MADELYNE AS A PILOT FOR HIS GRAND-PARENTS' AIRLINE IN ALASKA-- EH?!!
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- PLEASE HEAR ME!
KITTY PRYDE-- CALLING THROUGH THE PSILINK I MAINTAIN WITH ALL THE X-MEN.
I SENSE YOUR DISTRESS, CHILD-- WHAT'S THE MATTER?


WE'VE BEEN AMBUSHED, SIR-- I THINK BY THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS! COLOSSUS HAS BEEN TERRIBLY HURT!
THEY DIDN'T BOTHER WITH ME, BUT NIGHTCRAWLER'S AT LINCOLN CENTER! THEY'RE PROBABLY GOING AFTER HIM!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, KITTY.
I'LL ALERT NIGHTCRAWLER AND SEND STORM AND WOLVERINE TO YOUR AID.
I MUSTN'T LET ROGUE SEE ANYTHING IS AMISS. SHE USED TO BELONG TO THE BROTHERHOOD.
INDEED, SHE CONSIDERS THEIR LEADER, MYSTIQUE, HER MOTHER.
THIRTY METERS BELOW THE MANSION IS THE DANGER ROOM...
... WHEREIN X-MEN AND NEW MUTANTS ALIKE HONE THEIR VARIOUS SKILLS...
... AS INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS.
STORM IS AN ELEMENTAL, WITH ABSOLUTE CONTROL OVER THE WEATHER.
WOLVERINE POSSESSES A FAST-HEALING TALENT, WHICH CAN COPE WITH ALMOST ANY WOUND OR DISEASE...
... AND ALSO GIVES HIM ENHANCED PHYSICAL SENSES AND ABILITIES.
HIS SKELETON IS A SYNTHESIS OF BONE AND ADAMANTIUM--THE STRONGEST SUBSTANCE KNOWN-- MAKING THEM VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.
SNIKT!
HIS CLAWS ARE FORGED OF THE PURE METAL. THEY CAN CUT THROUGH ANYTHING.
VERY NICE. YOU SLASHED THE CAPE FROM MY BODY WITHOUT TOUCHING ME.
PIECE O' CAKE.
OH, REALLY?
NEXT TIME, I'LL FLY FASTER.


A LADY COULD GET HURT THAT WAY.
THE RISK IS WHAT MAKES IT FUN.
THAT'S YUKIO'S LINE-- USUALLY WHEN SHE'S PLAYIN' "CHICKEN" WITH A TWO HUNDRED MILE-AN-HOUR BULLET TRAIN.

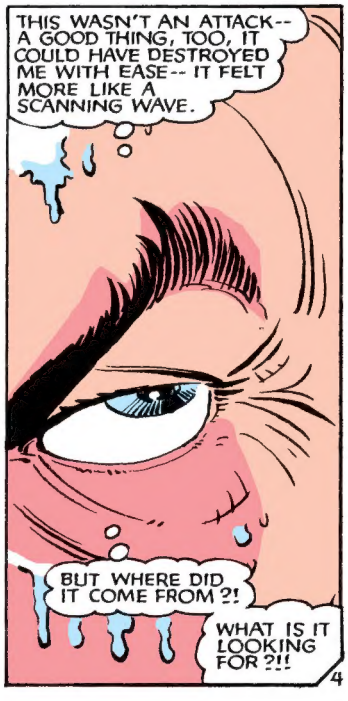
ONE COULD HAVE WORSE ROLE MODELS, LOGAN.
X-MEN, WE HAVE AN EMERGENCY.


PROFESSOR, HAVE YOU ALERTED ROGUE?
I BELIEVE, STORM, SHE IS BEST LEFT OUT OF THIS.

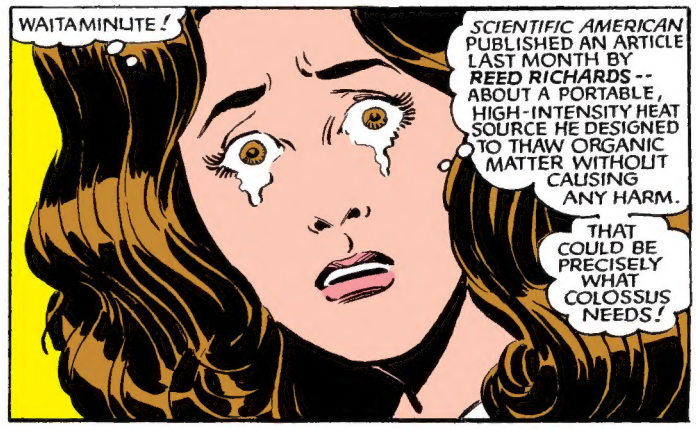

A BATTLE WITH THOSE WHO WERE, UNTIL RECENTLY, HER TEAM-MATES AND FRIENDS MIGHT PUT HER LOYALTIES TO AN UNENDURABLE TEST.
I CONCUR.
I'M RECEIVING NO THOUGHT PATTERNS FROM COLOSSUS-- BUT THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THE WORST. HE MAY SIMPLY BE IN DEEP SHOCK.

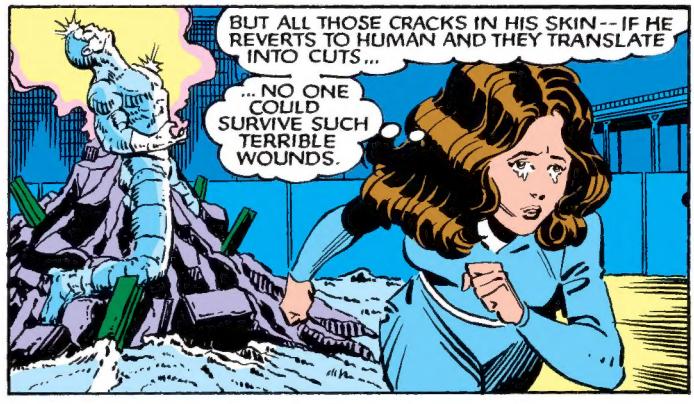
IF HE IS ALIVE, THOUGH, HOWEVER WILL WE REVIVE--
ARRGH!
A BOLT OF PSIONIC FORCE-- SMASHING THROUGH MY NATURAL DEFENSES LIKE THEY DON'T EXIST!

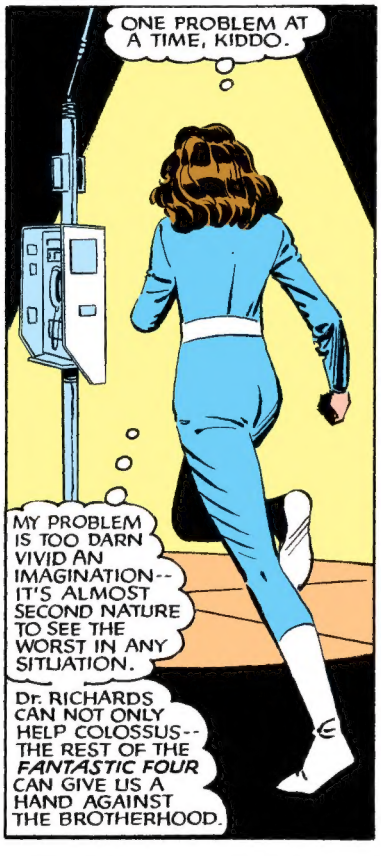
PROFESSOR, YOU CRIED OUT-- IS EV'RYTHING OKAY?
A SUDDEN... HEADACHE, ROGUE, THAT'S ALL.
WANT SOME ASPIRIN?
THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL, THANK YOU.

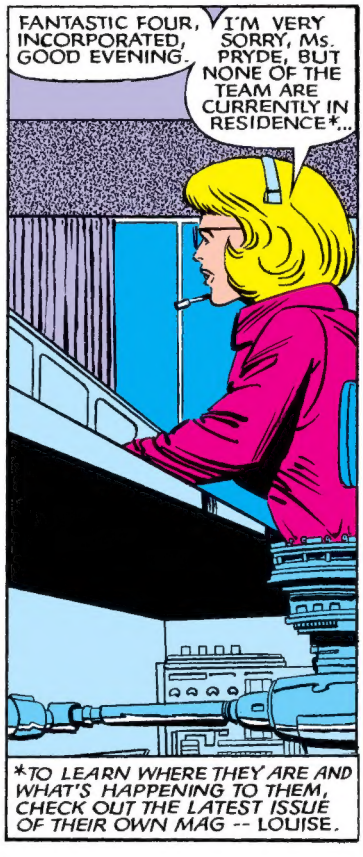

THIS WASN'T AN ATTACK-- A GOOD THING, TOO, IT COULD HAVE DESTROYED ME WITH EASE-- IT FELT MORE LIKE A SCANNING WAVE.
BUT WHERE DID IT COME FROM?!
WHAT IS IT LOOKING FOR?!!

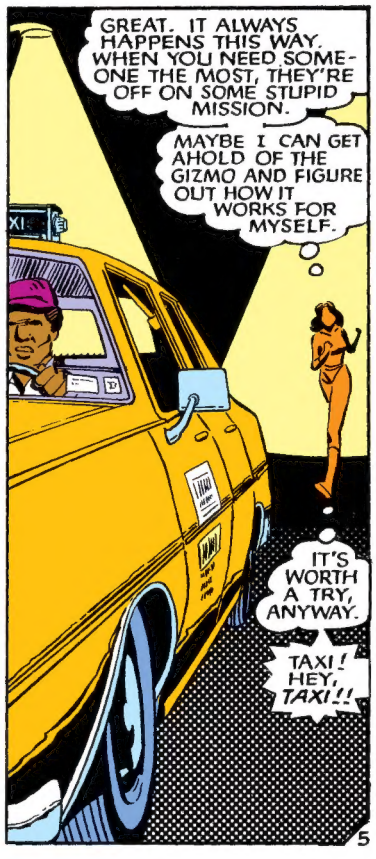
MEANWHILE...
MY PHASING POWER WON'T BE MUCH USE AGAINST THE BROTHERHOOD. IF I JOIN THE FIGHT, THE OTHER X-MEN'LL BE TOO BUSY LOOKING OUT FOR ME TO LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES.
BUT I CAN'T JUST STAY HERE, DOING NOTHING, NO MATTER WHAT I'M TOLD!

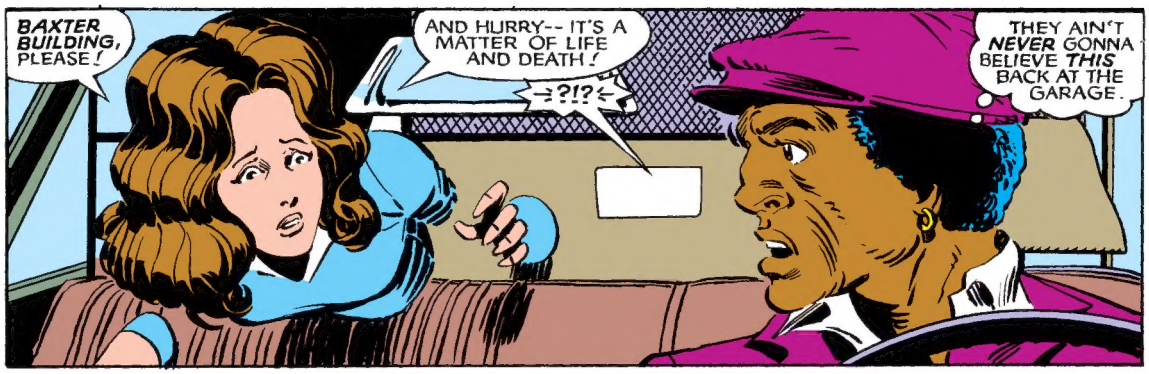

WAITAMINUTE!
SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE LAST MONTH BY REED RICHARDS -- ABOUT A PORTABLE, HIGH-INTENSITY HEAT SOURCE HE DESIGNED TO THAW ORGANIC MATTER WITHOUT CAUSING ANY HARM.
THAT COULD BE PRECISELY WHAT COLOSSUS NEEDS!

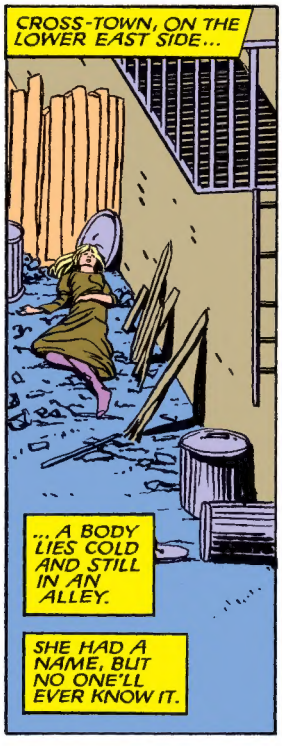

BUT ALL THOSE CRACKS IN HIS SKIN -- IF HE REVERTS TO HUMAN AND THEY TRANSLATE INTO CUTS...
...NO ONE COULD SURVIVE SUCH TERRIBLE WOUNDS.

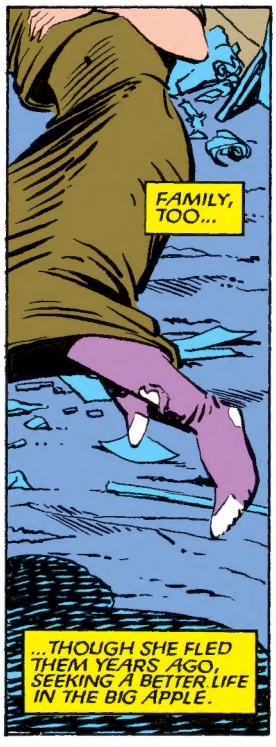

ONE PROBLEM AT A TIME, KIDDO.
MY PROBLEM IS TOO DARN VIVID AN IMAGINATION -- IT'S ALMOST SECOND NATURE TO SEE THE WORST IN ANY SITUATION.
Dr. RICHARDS CAN NOT ONLY HELP COLOSSUS -- THE REST OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR CAN GIVE US A HAND AGAINST THE BROTHERHOOD.

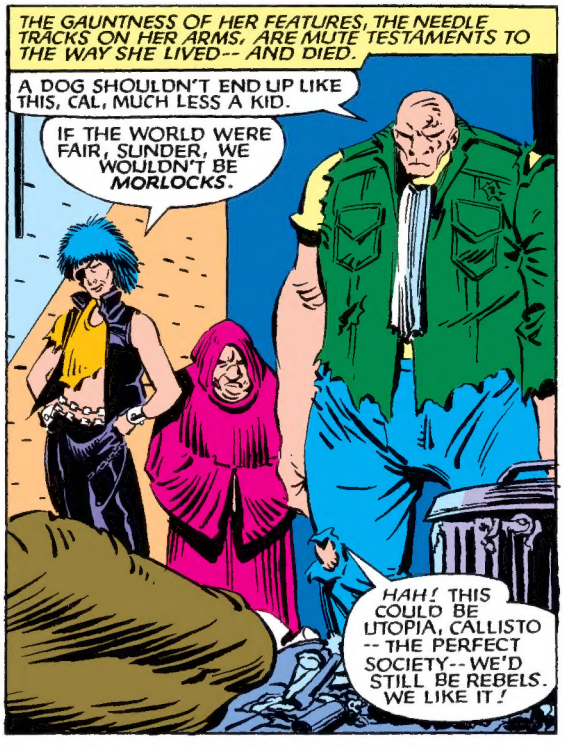

FANTASTIC FOUR, INCORPORATED, GOOD EVENING.
I'M VERY SORRY, Ms. PRYDE, BUT NONE OF THE TEAM ARE CURRENTLY IN RESIDENCE*...
*TO LEARN WHERE THEY ARE AND WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THEM, CHECK OUT THE LATEST ISSUE OF THEIR OWN MAG -- LOUISE.


GREAT. IT ALWAYS HAPPENS THIS WAY. WHEN YOU NEED SOMEONE THE MOST, THEY'RE OFF ON SOME STUPID MISSION.
MAYBE I CAN GET AHOLD OF THE GIZMO AND FIGURE OUT HOW IT WORKS FOR MYSELF.
IT'S WORTH A TRY, ANYWAY.
TAXI! HEY, TAXI!!

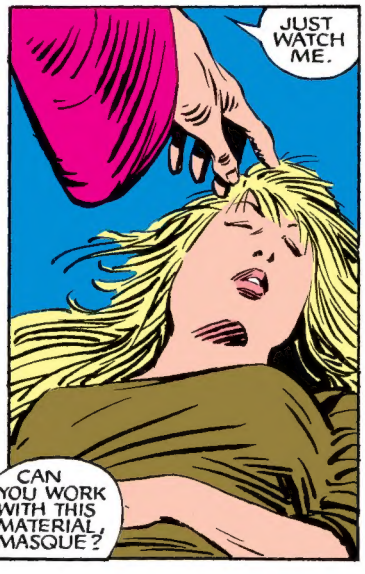

BAXTER BUILDING, PLEASE!
AND HURRY-- IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
?!?
THEY AIN'T NEVER GONNA BELIEVE THIS BACK AT THE GARAGE.


CROSS-TOWN, ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE...
...A BODY LIES COLD AND STILL IN AN ALLEY.
SHE HAD A NAME, BUT NO ONE'LL EVER KNOW IT.

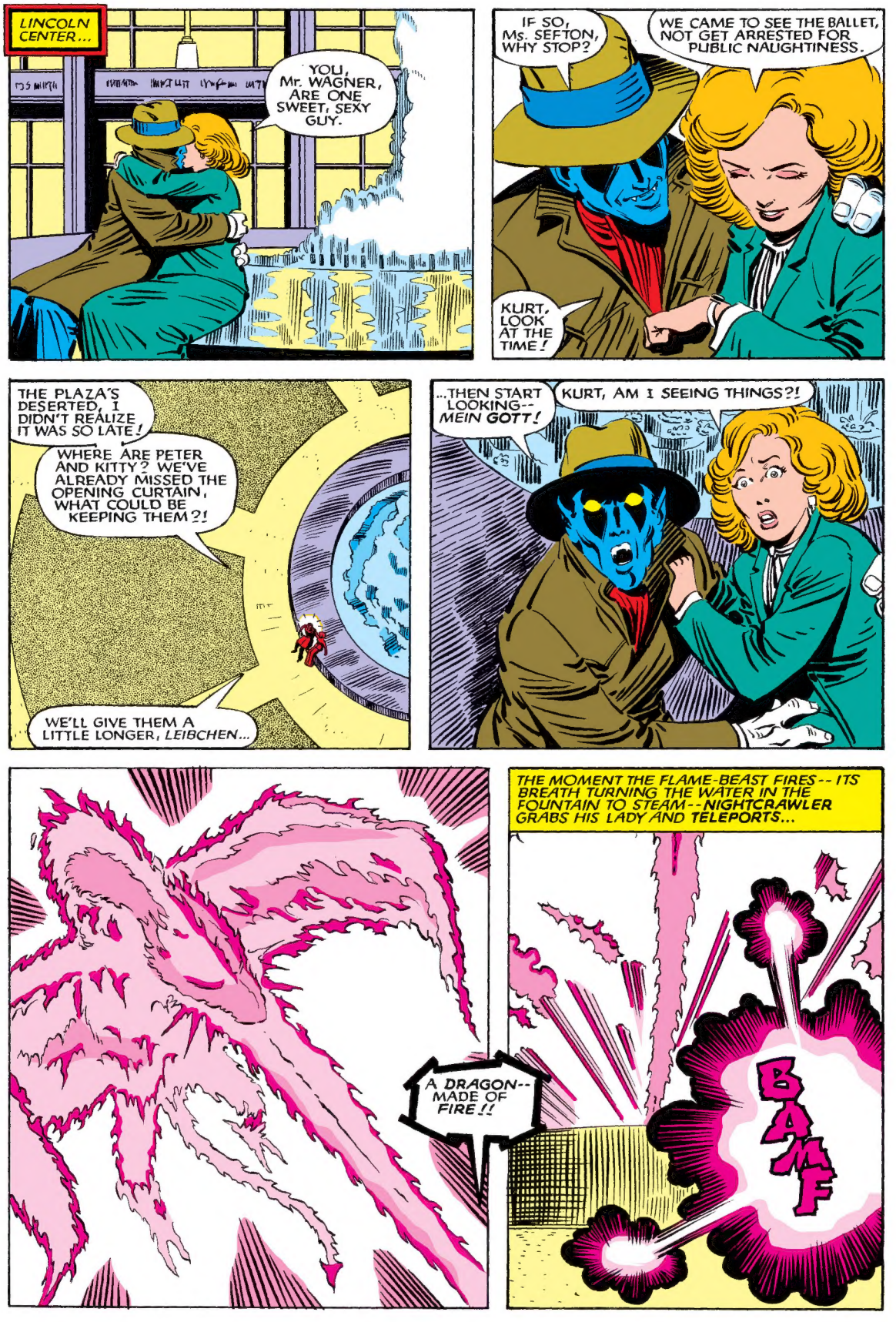

FAMILY, TOO...
...THOUGH SHE FLED THEM YEARS AGO, SEEKING A BETTER LIFE IN THE BIG APPLE.

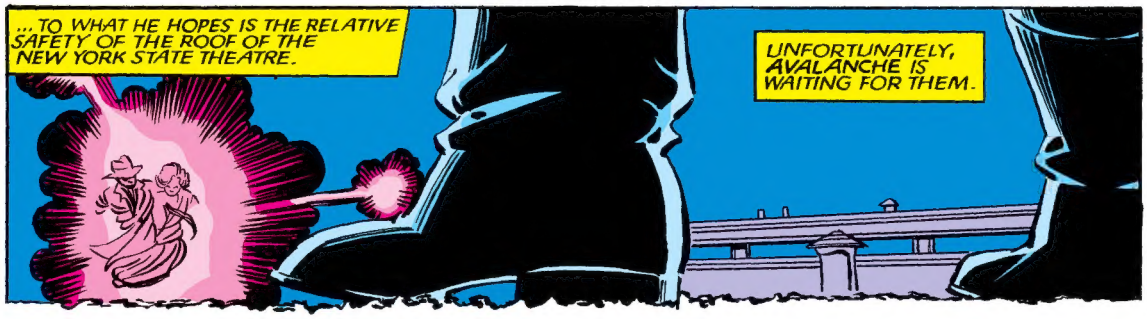

THE GAUNTNESS OF HER FEATURES, THE NEEDLE TRACKS ON HER ARMS, ARE MUTE TESTAMENTS TO THE WAY SHE LIVED-- AND DIED.
A DOG SHOULDN'T END UP LIKE THIS, CAL, MUCH LESS A KID.
IF THE WORLD WERE FAIR, SUNDER, WE WOULDN'T BE MORLOCKS.
HAH! THIS COULD BE UTOPIA, CALLISTO -- THE PERFECT SOCIETY-- WE'D STILL BE REBELS. WE LIKE IT!

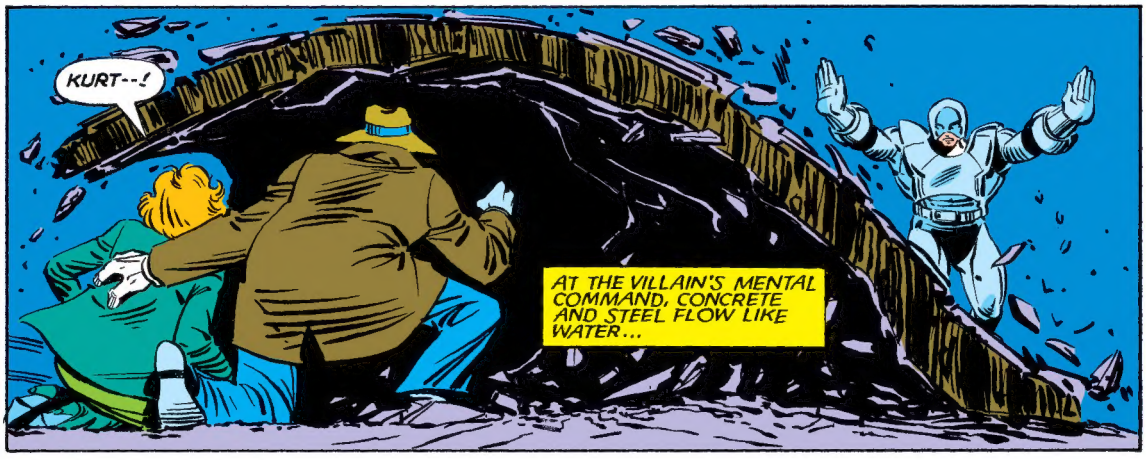
TOO TRUE, MASQUE.
WE'RE OUTCASTS AS MUCH BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE AS BECAUSE WE'RE MUTANTS.
AND BEFORE TONIGHT'S OVER, OUR NUMBER'S GOING TO INCREASE BY ONE.

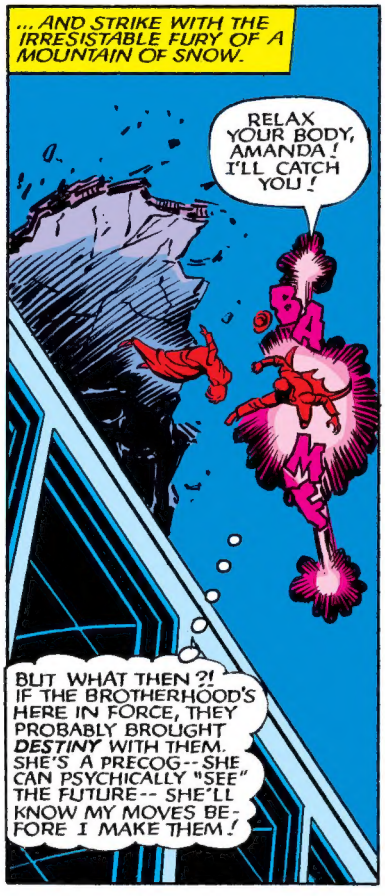

JUST WATCH ME.
CAN YOU WORK WITH THIS MATERIAL, MASQUE?

WHEN I'M DONE, PRETTYKITTY'S OWN PARENTS WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL 'EM APART!


LINCOLN CENTER...
YOU, Mr. WAGNER, ARE ONE SWEET, SEXY GUY.
IF SO, Ms. SEFTON, WHY STOP?
WE CAME TO SEE THE BALLET, NOT GET ARRESTED FOR PUBLIC NAUGHTINESS.
KURT, LOOK AT THE TIME!
THE PLAZA'S DESERTED, I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SO LATE!
WHERE ARE PETER AND KITTY? WE'VE ALREADY MISSED THE OPENING CURTAIN, WHAT COULD BE KEEPING THEM?!
WE'LL GIVE THEM A LITTLE LONGER, LEIBCHEN...
...THEN START LOOKING-- MEIN GOTT!
KURT, AM I SEEING THINGS?!
A DRAGON-- MADE OF FIRE!!
THE MOMENT THE FLAME-BEAST FIRES-- ITS BREATH TURNING THE WATER IN THE FOUNTAIN TO STEAM--NIGHTCRAWLER GRABS HIS LADY AND TELEPORTS...
BAMF

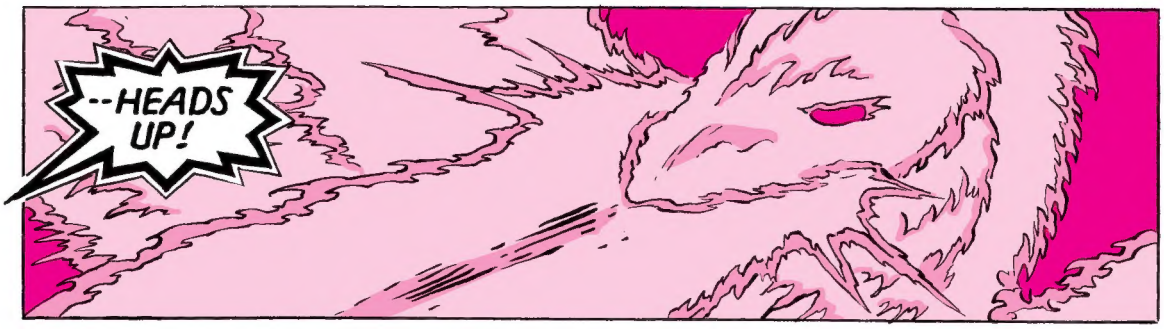

...TO WHAT HE HOPES IS THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF THE ROOF OF THE NEW YORK STATE THEATRE.
UNFORTUNATELY, AVALANCHE IS WAITING FOR THEM.

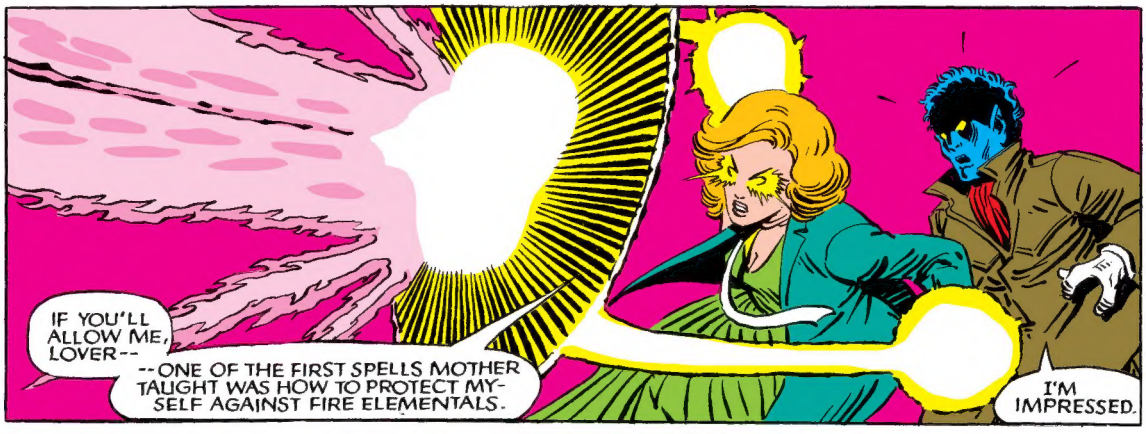

KURT--!
AT THE VILLAIN'S MENTAL COMMAND, CONCRETE AND STEEL FLOW LIKE WATER...

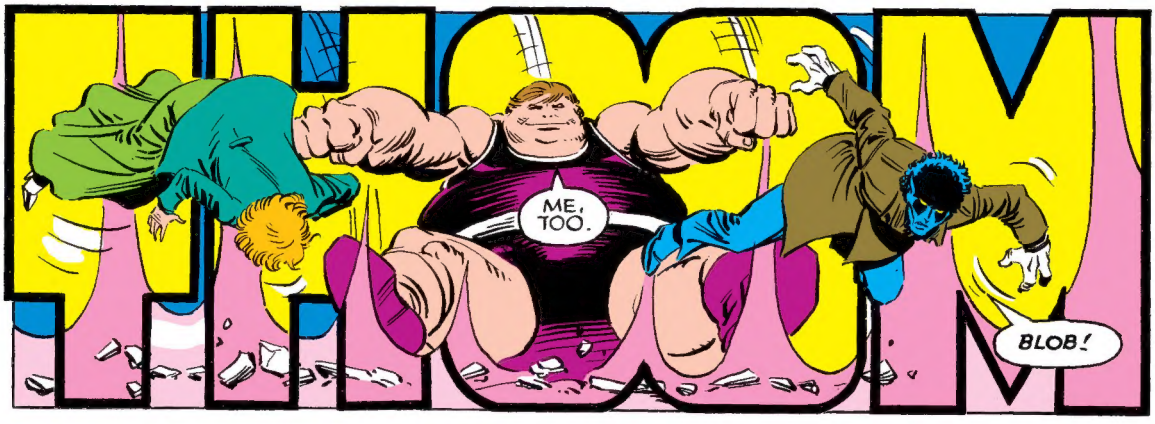

...AND STRIKE WITH THE IRRESISTABLE FURY OF A MOUNTAIN OF SNOW.
RELAX YOUR BODY, AMANDA! I'LL CATCH YOU!
BA
MS
BUT WHAT THEN?! IF THE BROTHERHOOD'S HERE IN FORCE, THEY PROBABLY BROUGHT DESTINY WITH THEM. SHE'S A PRECOG--SHE CAN PSYCHICALLY "SEE" THE FUTURE-- SHE'LL KNOW MY MOVES BEFORE I MAKE THEM!

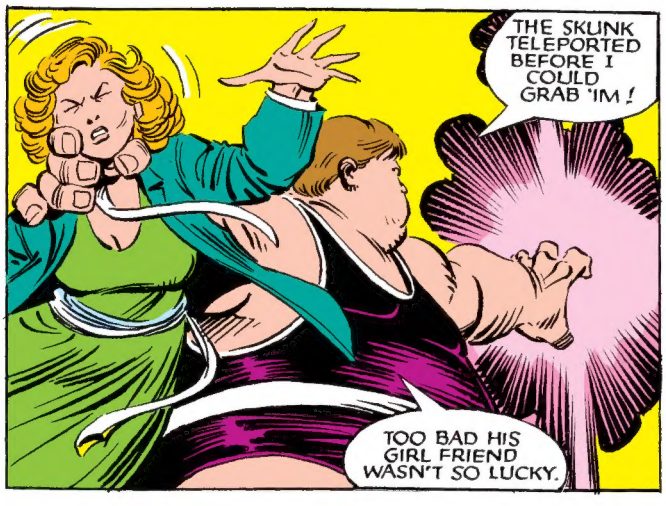
I HATE RUNNING FROM A FIGHT-- BUT I WON'T PLACE AMANDA'S LIFE AT RISK.
KURT, WHO'S ATTACKING US?! AND WHY?!!

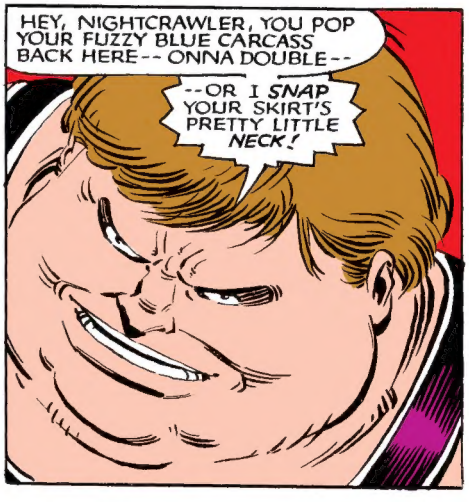
THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS--SORT OF THE X-MEN'S OPPOSITE NUMBER. I ASSUME THEY'RE OUT TO SETTLE OLD SCORES.
UNLESS... THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH ROGUE!
NIGHTCRAWLER, ALERT! YOU ARE IN IMMINANT DANGER OF ATTACK...
DANKE, PROFESSOR. I ONLY WISH YOUR WARNING HAD COME A MINUTE SOONER.
NIGHT-CRAWLER--

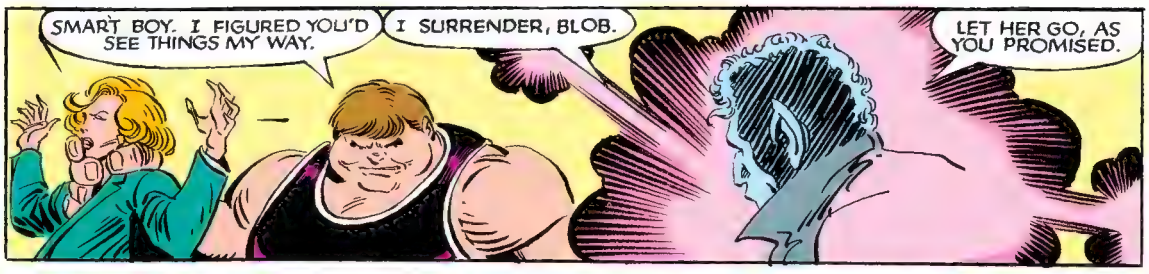

--HEADS UP!


IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME, LOVER--
--ONE OF THE FIRST SPELLS MOTHER TAUGHT WAS HOW TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST FIRE ELEMENTALS.
I'M IMPRESSED.


ME, TOO.
BLOB!


THE SKUNK TELEPORTED BEFORE I COULD GRAB 'IM!
TOO BAD HIS GIRL FRIEND WASN'T SO LUCKY.

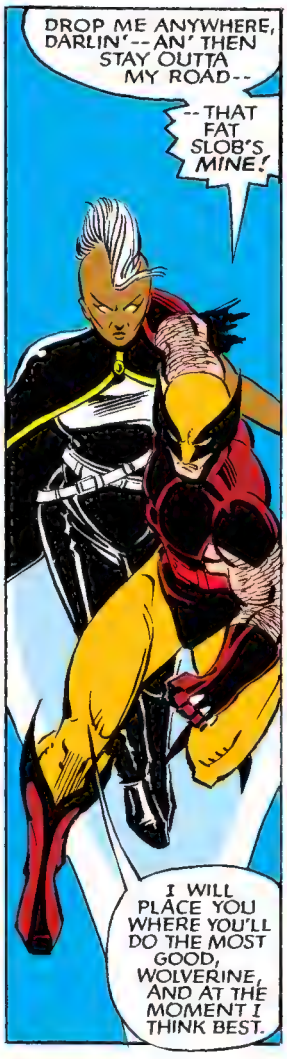

HEY, NIGHTCRAWLER, YOU POP YOUR FUZZY BLUE CARCASS BACK HERE-- ONNA DOUBLE--
--OR I SNAP YOUR SKIRT'S PRETTY LITTLE NECK!

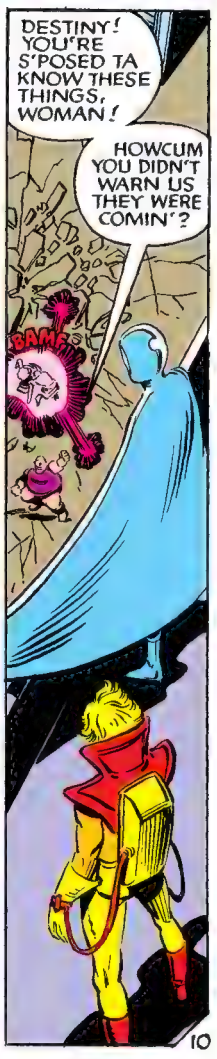

SMART BOY. I FIGURED YOU'D SEE THINGS MY WAY.
I SURRENDER, BLOB.
LET HER GO, AS YOU PROMISED.

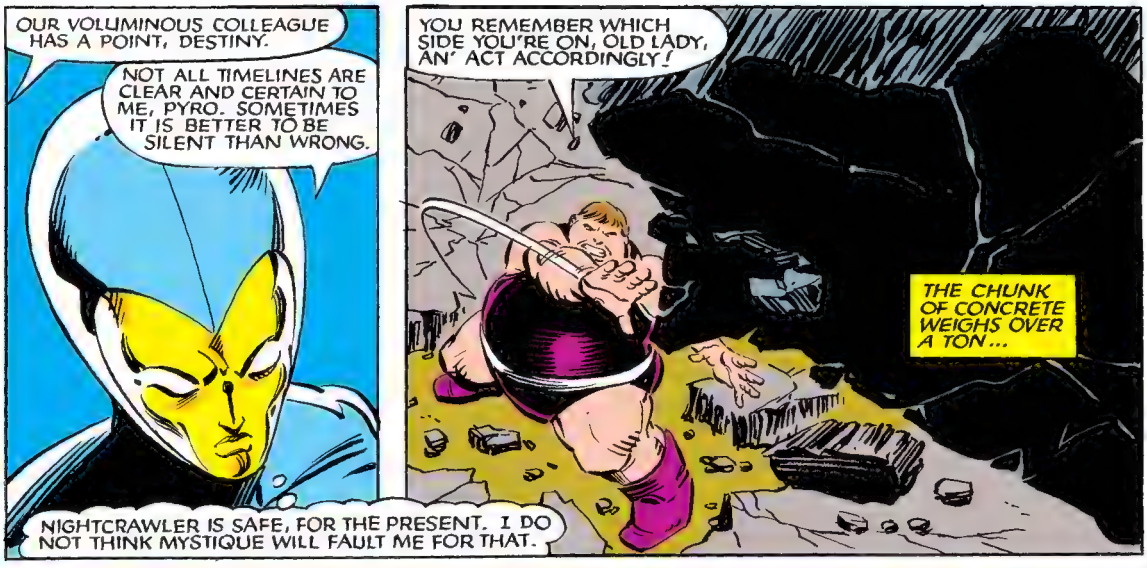
SO I LIED.

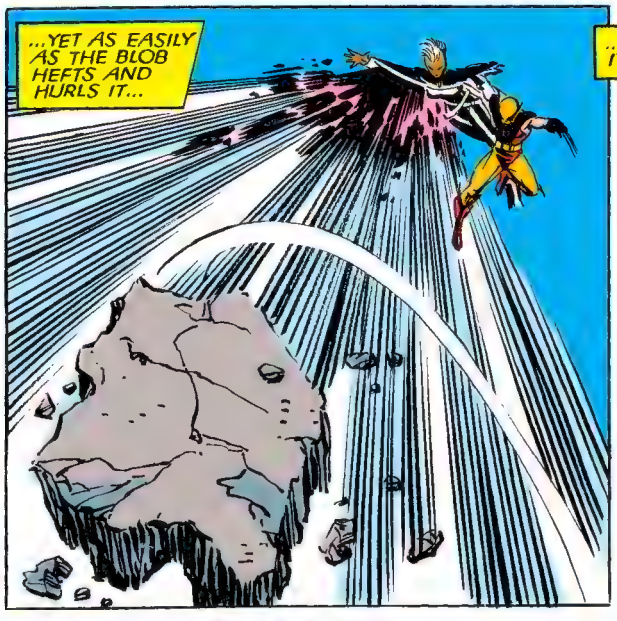
IF YOU VALUE YOUR OWN HEALTH, BLOB--
YEEEOW!

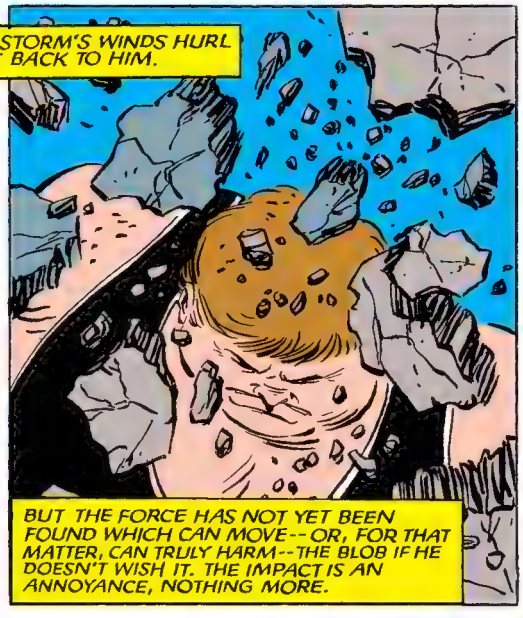
-- RELEASE THEM BOTH!
I WUZ WUN'DRIN' WHEN THE CAVALRY'D SHOW.

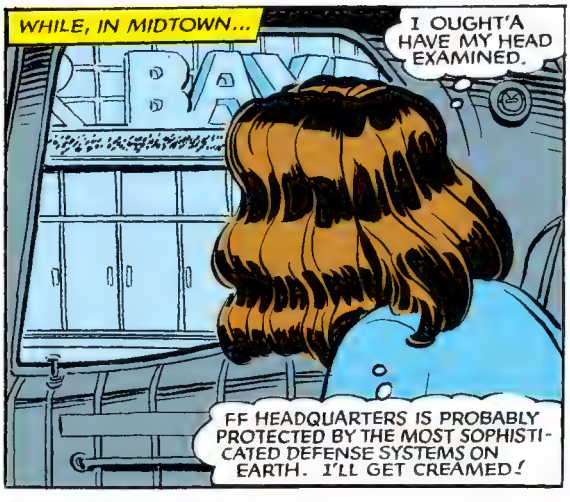

DROP ME ANYWHERE, DARLIN'--AN' THEN STAY OUTTA MY ROAD--
--THAT FAT SLOB'S MINE!
I WILL PLACE YOU WHERE YOU'LL DO THE MOST GOOD, WOLVERINE, AND AT THE MOMENT I THINK BEST.

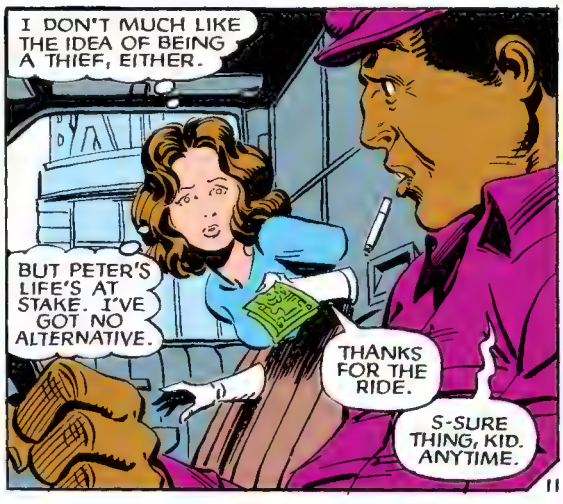

DESTINY! YOU'RE S'POSED TA KNOW THESE THINGS, WOMAN!
HOWCUM YOU DIDN'T WARN US THEY WERE COMIN'?
BAMF

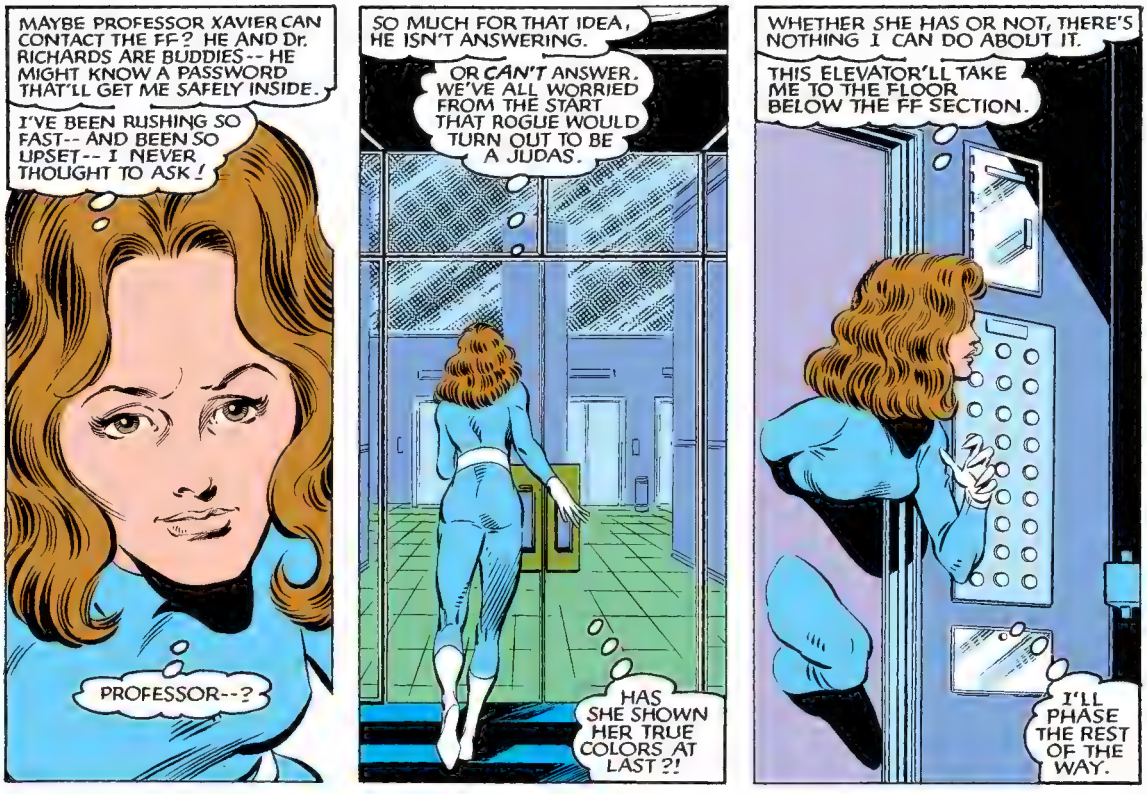

OUR VOLUMINOUS COLLEAGUE HAS A POINT, DESTINY.
NOT ALL TIMELINES ARE CLEAR AND CERTAIN TO ME, PYRO. SOMETIMES IT IS BETTER TO BE SILENT THAN WRONG.
YOU REMEMBER WHICH SIDE YOU'RE ON, OLD LADY, AN' ACT ACCORDINGLY!
THE CHUNK OF CONCRETE WEIGHS OVER A TON...
NIGHTCRAWLER IS SAFE, FOR THE PRESENT. I DO NOT THINK MYSTIQUE WILL FAULT ME FOR THAT.

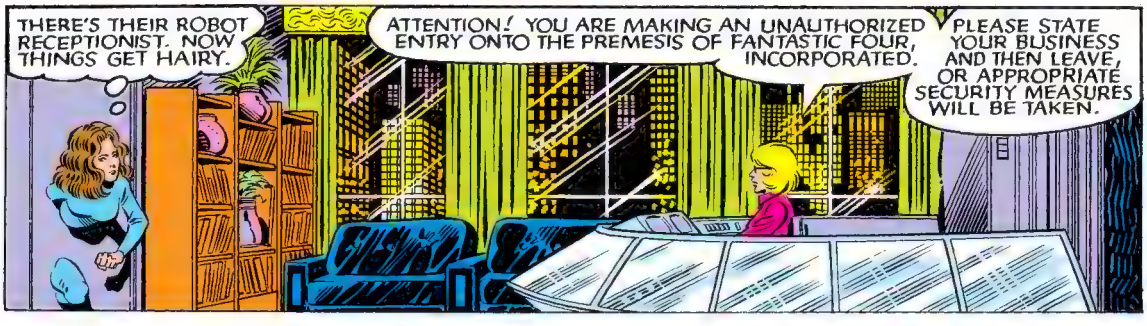

...YET AS EASILY AS THE BLOB HEFTS AND HURLS IT...

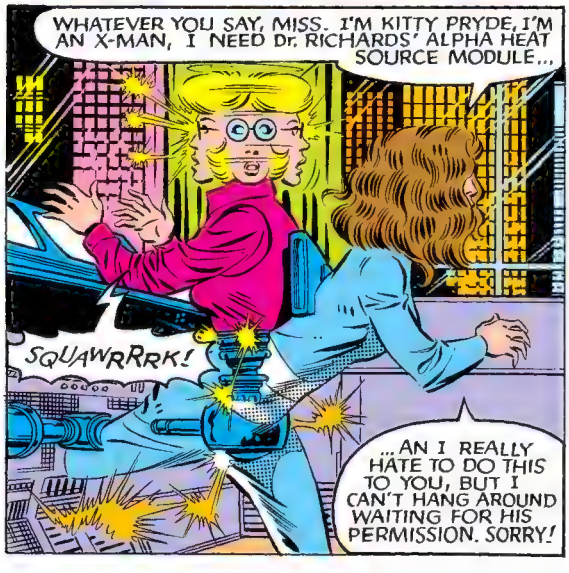

...STORM'S WINDS HURL IT BACK TO HIM.
BUT THE FORCE HAS NOT YET BEEN FOUND WHICH CAN MOVE--OR, FOR THAT MATTER, CAN TRULY HARM--THE BLOB IF HE DOESN'T WISH IT. THE IMPACT IS AN ANNOYANCE, NOTHING MORE.

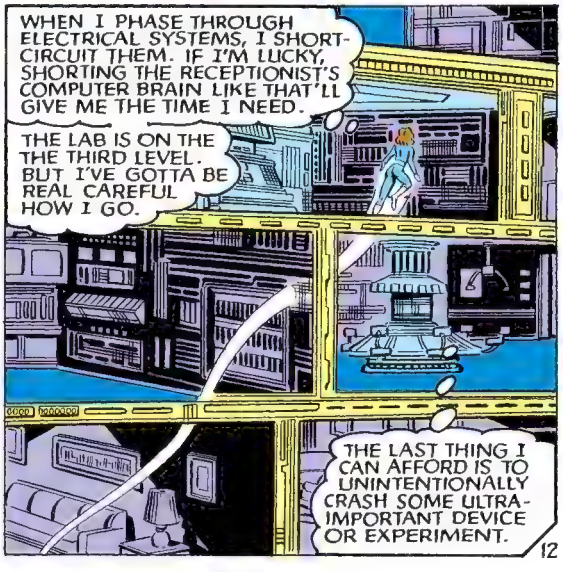

WHILE, IN MIDTOWN...
I OUGHT'A HAVE MY HEAD EXAMINED.
FF HEADQUARTERS IS PROBABLY PROTECTED BY THE MOST SOPHISTICATED DEFENSE SYSTEMS ON EARTH. I'LL GET CREAMED!

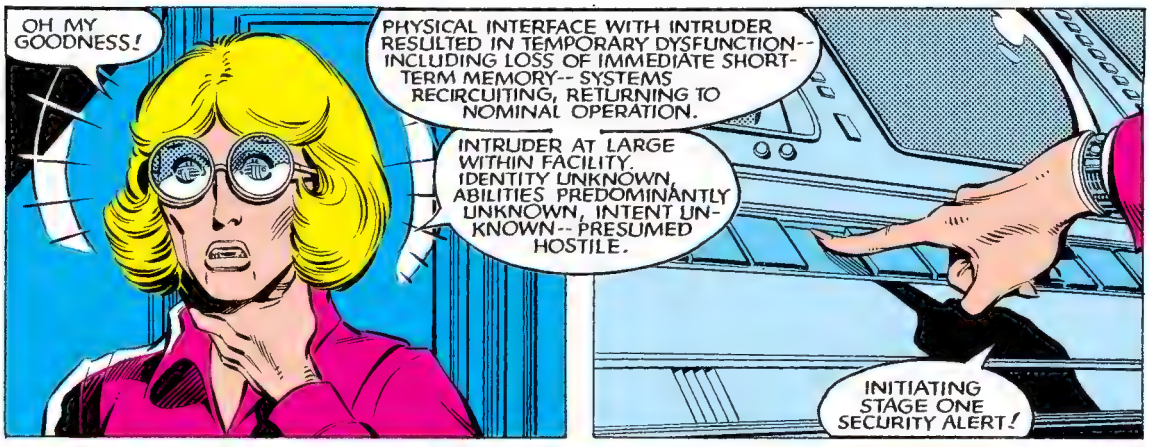

I DON'T MUCH LIKE THE IDEA OF BEING A THIEF, EITHER.
BUT PETER'S LIFE'S AT STAKE. I'VE GOT NO ALTERNATIVE.
THANKS FOR THE RIDE.
S-SURE THING, KID. ANYTIME.

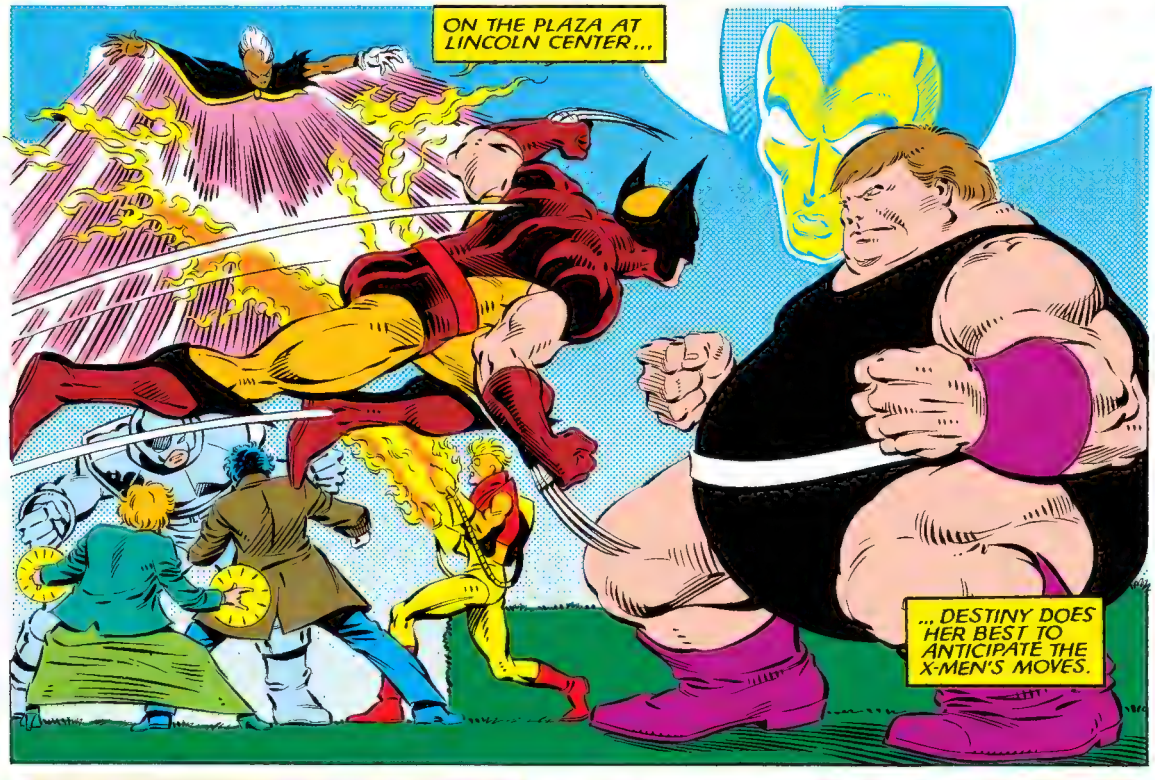

MAYBE PROFESSOR XAVIER CAN CONTACT THE FF? HE AND Dr. RICHARDS ARE BUDDIES-- HE MIGHT KNOW A PASSWORD THAT'LL GET ME SAFELY INSIDE.
I'VE BEEN RUSHING SO FAST-- AND BEEN SO UPSET-- I NEVER THOUGHT TO ASK!
PROFESSOR--?
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA, HE ISN'T ANSWERING.
OR CAN'T ANSWER. WE'VE ALL WORRIED FROM THE START THAT ROGUE WOULD TURN OUT TO BE A JUDAS.
HAS SHE SHOWN HER TRUE COLORS AT LAST?!
WHETHER SHE HAS OR NOT, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
THIS ELEVATOR'LL TAKE ME TO THE FLOOR BELOW THE FF SECTION.
I'LL PHASE THE REST OF THE WAY.

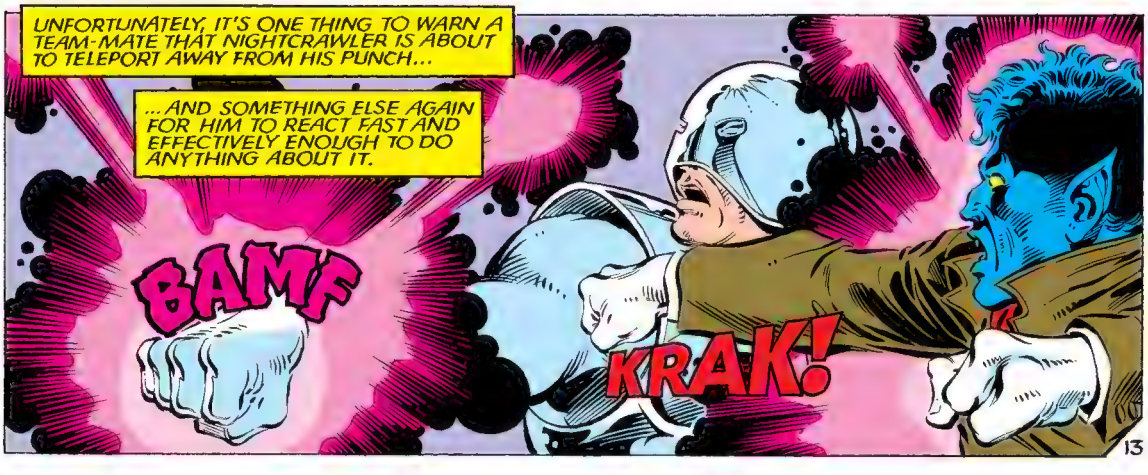

THERE'S THEIR ROBOT RECEPTIONIST. NOW THINGS GET HAIRY.
ATTENTION! YOU ARE MAKING AN UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY ONTO THE PREMESIS OF FANTASTIC FOUR, INCORPORATED.
PLEASE STATE YOUR BUSINESS AND THEN LEAVE, OR APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN.


WHATEVER YOU SAY, MISS. I'M KITTY PRYDE, I'M AN X-MAN, I NEED Dr. RICHARDS' ALPHA HEAT SOURCE MODULE...
SQUAWRRRK!
...AN I REALLY HATE TO DO THIS TO YOU, BUT I CAN'T HANG AROUND WAITING FOR HIS PERMISSION. SORRY!


WHEN I PHASE THROUGH ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS, I SHORT-CIRCUIT THEM. IF I'M LUCKY, SHORTING THE RECEPTIONIST'S COMPUTER BRAIN LIKE THAT'LL GIVE ME THE TIME I NEED.
THE LAB IS ON THE THE THIRD LEVEL. BUT I'VE GOTTA BE REAL CAREFUL HOW I GO.
THE LAST THING I CAN AFFORD IS TO UNINTENTIONALLY CRASH SOME ULTRA-IMPORTANT DEVICE OR EXPERIMENT.


OH MY GOODNESS!
PHYSICAL INTERFACE WITH INTRUDER RESULTED IN TEMPORARY DYSFUNCTION-- INCLUDING LOSS OF IMMEDIATE SHORT-TERM MEMORY-- SYSTEMS RECIRCUITING, RETURNING TO NOMINAL OPERATION.
INTRUDER AT LARGE WITHIN FACILITY. IDENTITY UNKNOWN, ABILITIES PREDOMINANTLY UNKNOWN, INTENT UNKNOWN-- PRESUMED HOSTILE.
INITIATING STAGE ONE SECURITY ALERT!


ON THE PLAZA AT LINCOLN CENTER...
... DESTINY DOES HER BEST TO ANTICIPATE THE X-MEN'S MOVES.

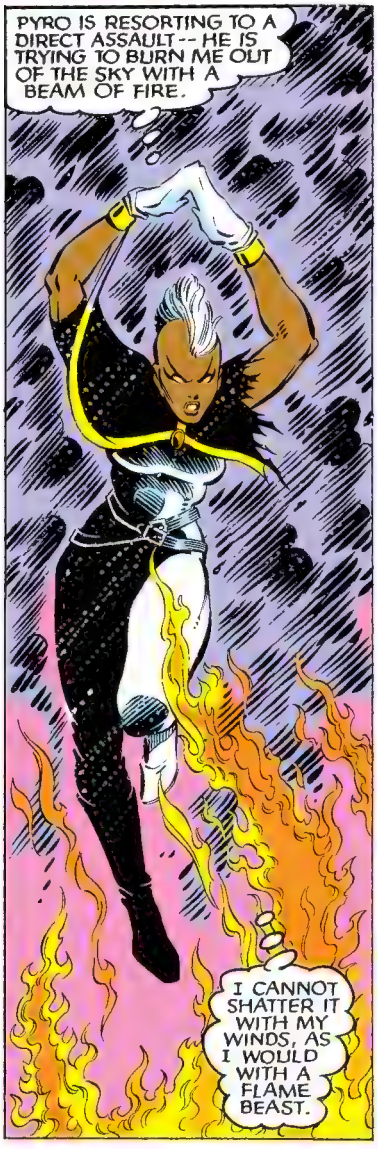

UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S ONE THING TO WARN A TEAM-MATE THAT NIGHTCRAWLER IS ABOUT TO TELEPORT AWAY FROM HIS PUNCH...
... AND SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN FOR HIM TO REACT FAST AND EFFECTIVELY ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
BAMF
KRAK!

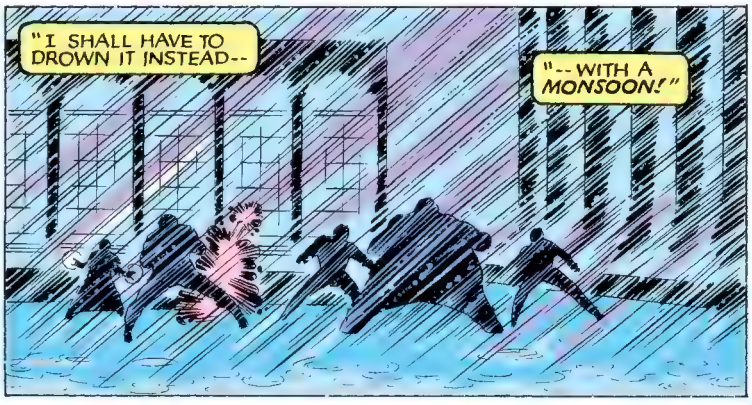
YOU GOT A MIDGET BRAIN TA GO WITH THAT PINT-SIZE BODY, RUNT?

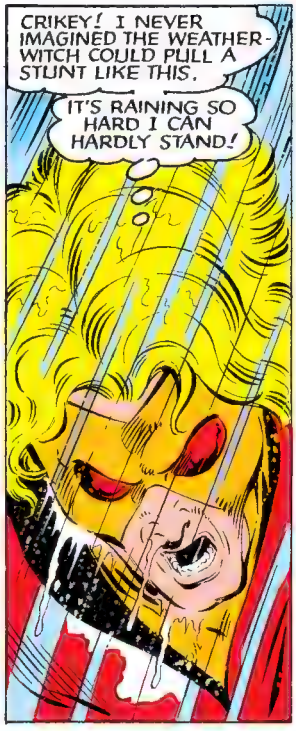
EVEN THE *HULK* CAN'T FLATTEN ME. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

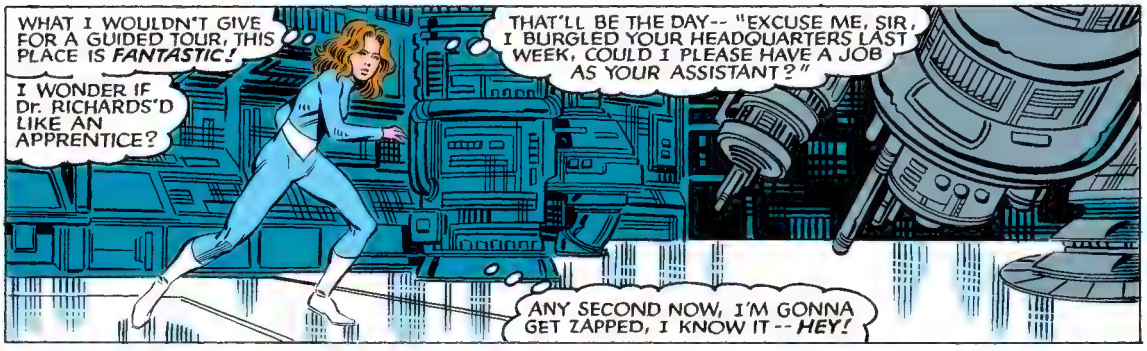
WHUNFF!

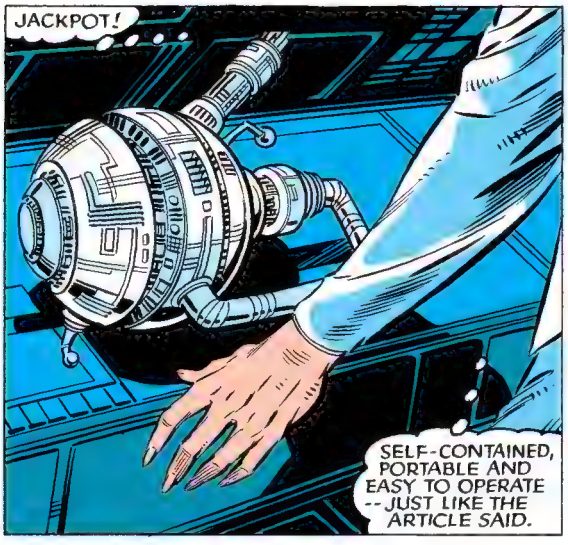
HOW 'BOUT I FALL ON YOU, SHORTY, WE'LL SEE HOW GOOD THOSE FANCY BONES O' YOURS REALLY ARE?

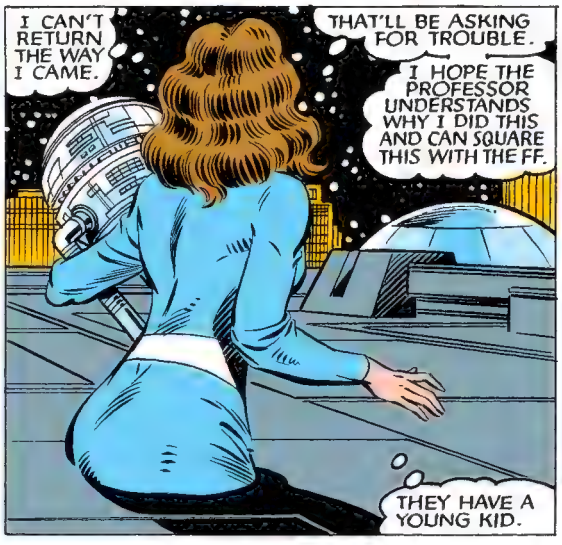


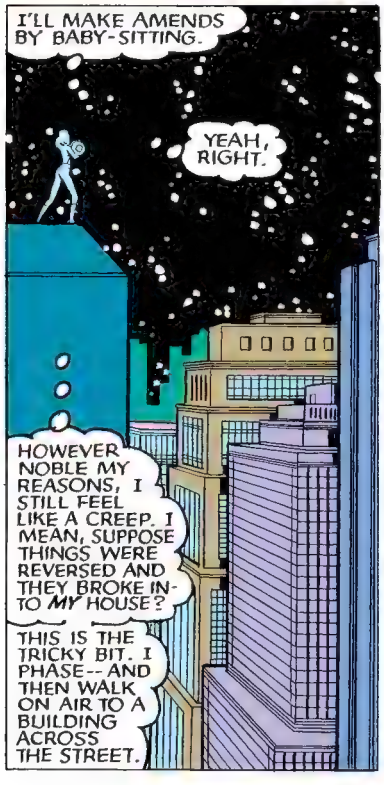


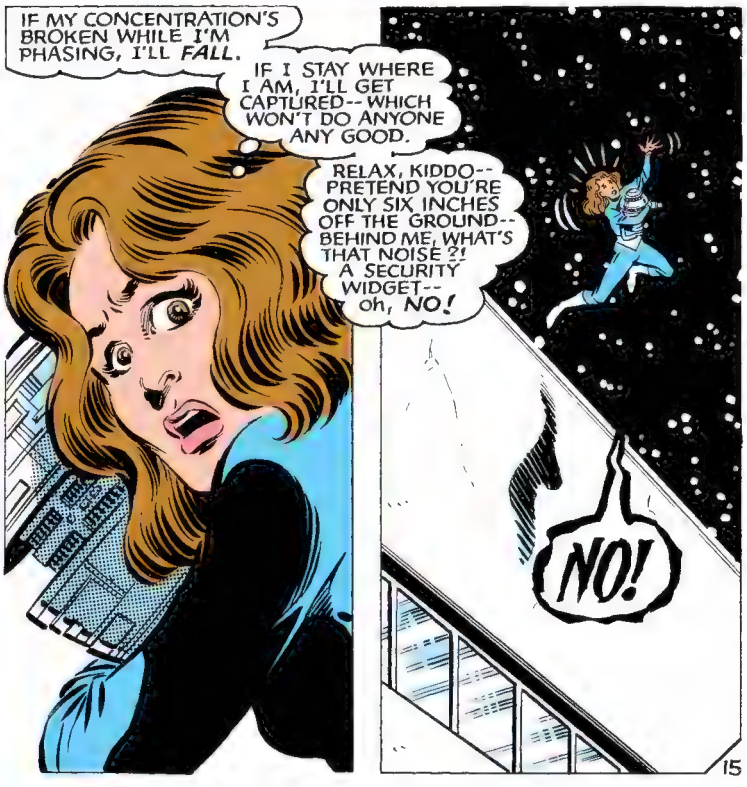


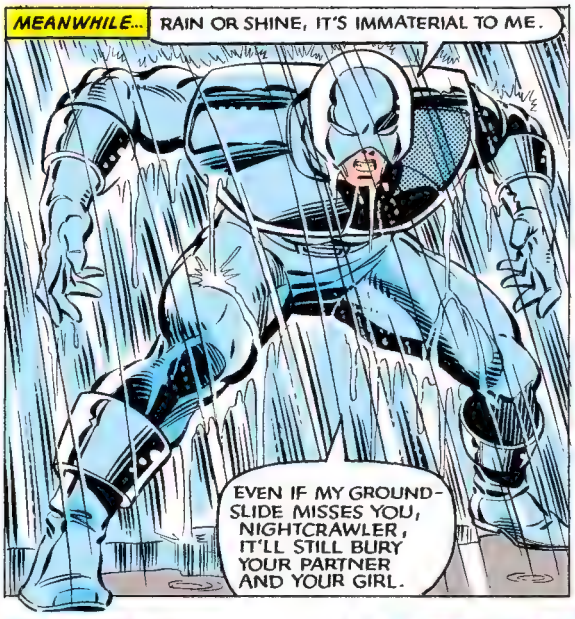

WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR A GUIDED TOUR, THIS PLACE IS FANTASTIC!
I WONDER IF Dr. RICHARDS'D LIKE AN APPRENTICE?
THAT'LL BE THE DAY-- "EXCUSE ME, SIR, I BURGLED YOUR HEADQUARTERS LAST WEEK, COULD I PLEASE HAVE A JOB AS YOUR ASSISTANT?"
ANY SECOND NOW, I'M GONNA GET ZAPPED, I KNOW IT -- HEY!

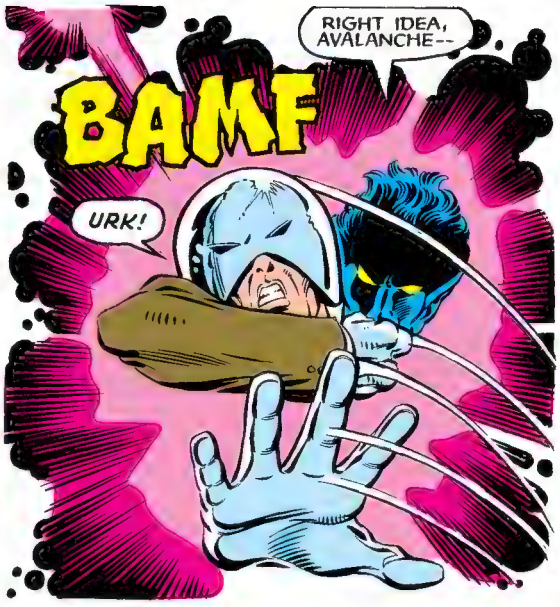

JACKPOT!
SELF-CONTAINED, PORTABLE AND EASY TO OPERATE -- JUST LIKE THE ARTICLE SAID.

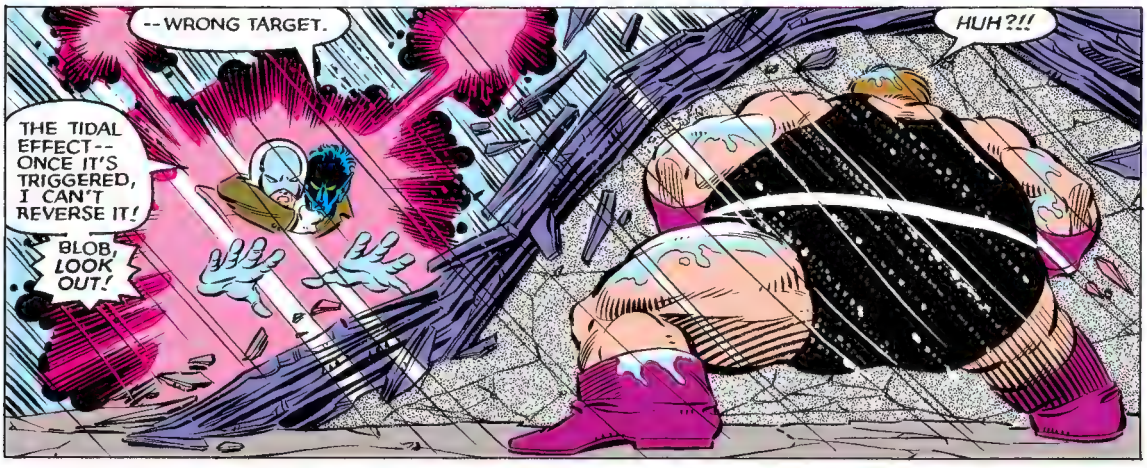

I CAN'T RETURN THE WAY I CAME.
THAT'LL BE ASKING FOR TROUBLE.
I HOPE THE PROFESSOR UNDERSTANDS WHY I DID THIS AND CAN SQUARE THIS WITH THE FF.
THEY HAVE A YOUNG KID.

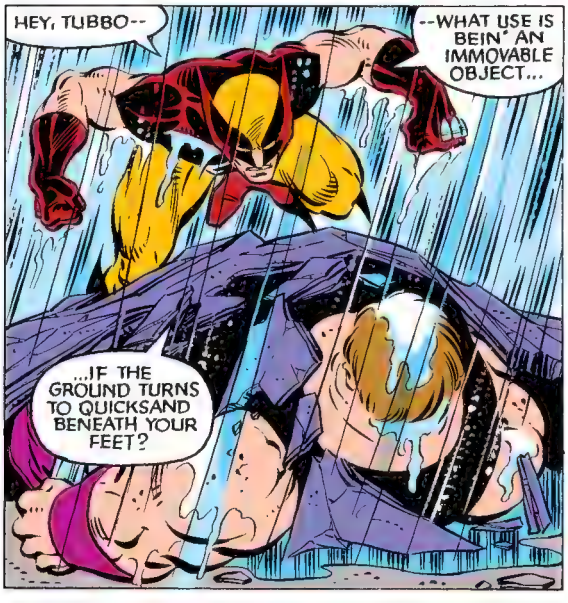

I'LL MAKE AMENDS BY BABY-SITTING.
YEAH, RIGHT.
HOWEVER NOBLE MY REASONS, I STILL FEEL LIKE A CREEP. I MEAN, SUPPOSE THINGS WERE REVERSED AND THEY BROKE INTO MY HOUSE?
THIS IS THE TRICKY BIT. I PHASE-- AND THEN WALK ON AIR TO A BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET.

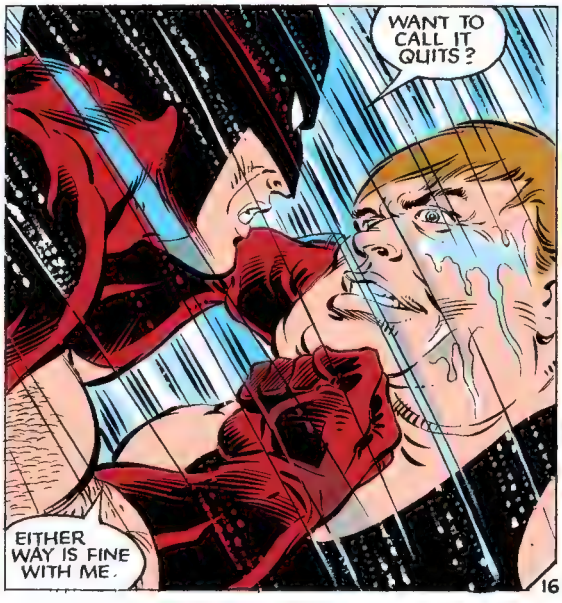

IF MY CONCENTRATION'S BROKEN WHILE I'M PHASING, I'LL FALL.
IF I STAY WHERE I AM, I'LL GET CAPTURED-- WHICH WON'T DO ANYONE ANY GOOD.
RELAX, KIDDO-- PRETEND YOU'RE ONLY SIX INCHES OFF THE GROUND-- BEHIND ME, WHAT'S THAT NOISE?! A SECURITY WIDGET-- oh, NO!
NO!

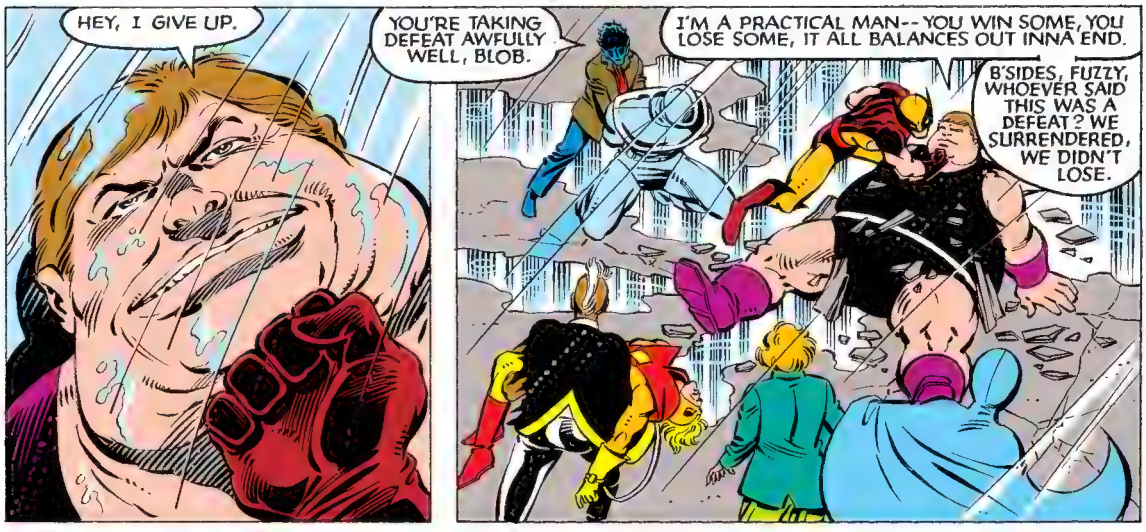

MEANWHILE...
RAIN OR SHINE, IT'S IMMATERIAL TO ME.
EVEN IF MY GROUND-SLIDE MISSES YOU, NIGHTCRAWLER, IT'LL STILL BURY YOUR PARTNER AND YOUR GIRL.

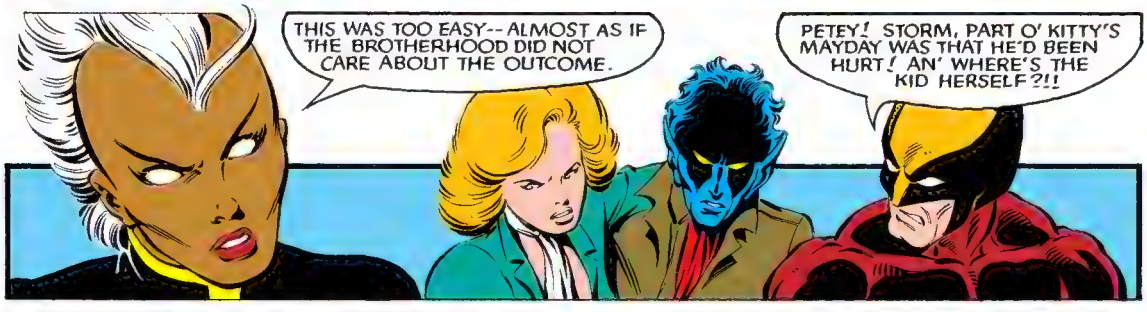

RIGHT IDEA, AVALANCHE--
BAMF
URK!


--WRONG TARGET.
HUH?!!
THE TIDAL EFFECT-- ONCE IT'S TRIGGERED, I CAN'T REVERSE IT!
BLOB, LOOK OUT!


HEY, TUBBO--
--WHAT USE IS BEIN' AN IMMOVABLE OBJECT...
...IF THE GROUND TURNS TO QUICKSAND BENEATH YOUR FEET?


WANT TO CALL IT QUITS?
EITHER WAY IS FINE WITH ME.

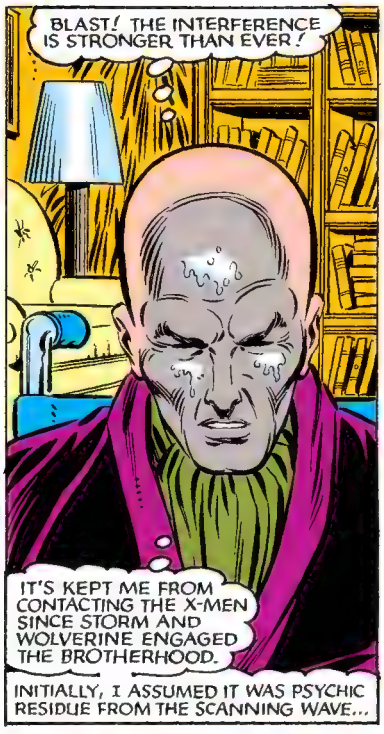

HEY, I GIVE UP.
YOU'RE TAKING DEFEAT AWFULLY WELL, BLOB.
I'M A PRACTICAL MAN--YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME, IT ALL BALANCES OUT INNA END.
B'SIDES, FUZZY, WHOEVER SAID THIS WAS A DEFEAT? WE SURRENDERED, WE DIDN'T LOSE.

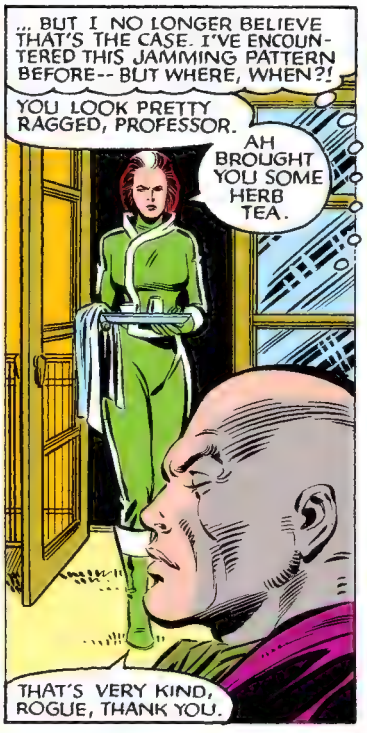

THIS WAS TOO EASY--ALMOST AS IF THE BROTHERHOOD DID NOT CARE ABOUT THE OUTCOME.
PETEY! STORM, PART O' KITTY'S MAYDAY WAS THAT HE'D BEEN HURT! AN' WHERE'S THE KID HERSELF?!!

DUMMY, THE GIRL DIDN'T MATTER, AN' HER RUSSKIE SMOOCH WAS ICIN' ONNA CAKE!
AIN'T YOU CLOWNS TWIGGED THINGS YET?!
WE WERE NEVER AFTER YOUR HIDES. THIS WAS A DIVERSION!

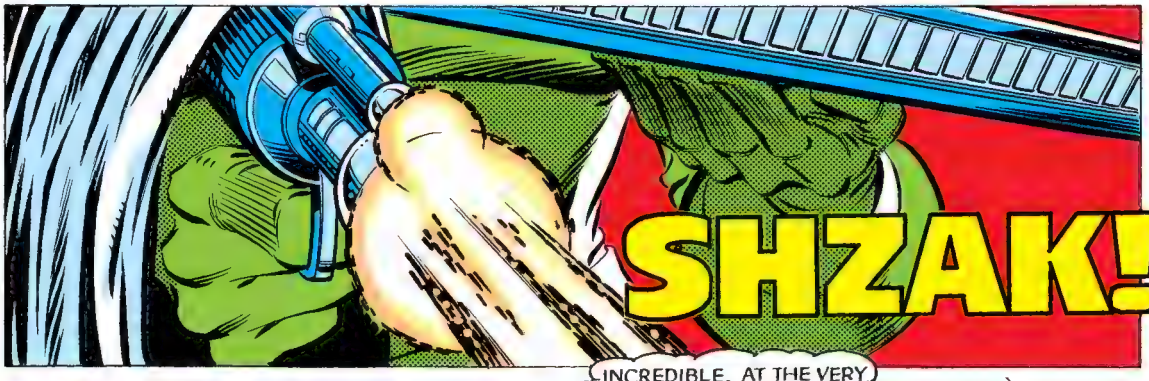
GO AHEAD, SEND US BACK TO PRISON. WE BEEN THERE BEFORE, WE'LL BUST OUT. BUT YOU POOR SLOBS'RE GONNA HAVETA FIND YOURSELVES A NEW TEACHER.

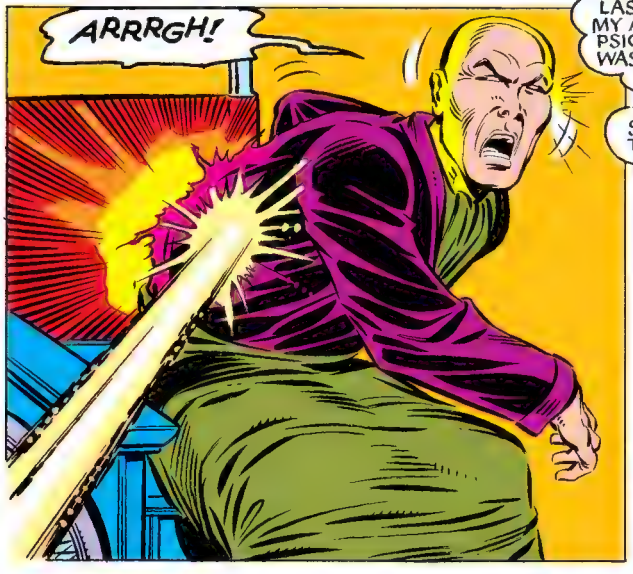
"OR A WAY TO RAISE THE OLD ONE FROM THE DEAD!"


BLAST! THE INTERFERENCE IS STRONGER THAN EVER!
IT'S KEPT ME FROM CONTACTING THE X-MEN SINCE STORM AND WOLVERINE ENGAGED THE BROTHERHOOD.
INITIALLY, I ASSUMED IT WAS PSYCHIC RESIDUE FROM THE SCANNING WAVE...

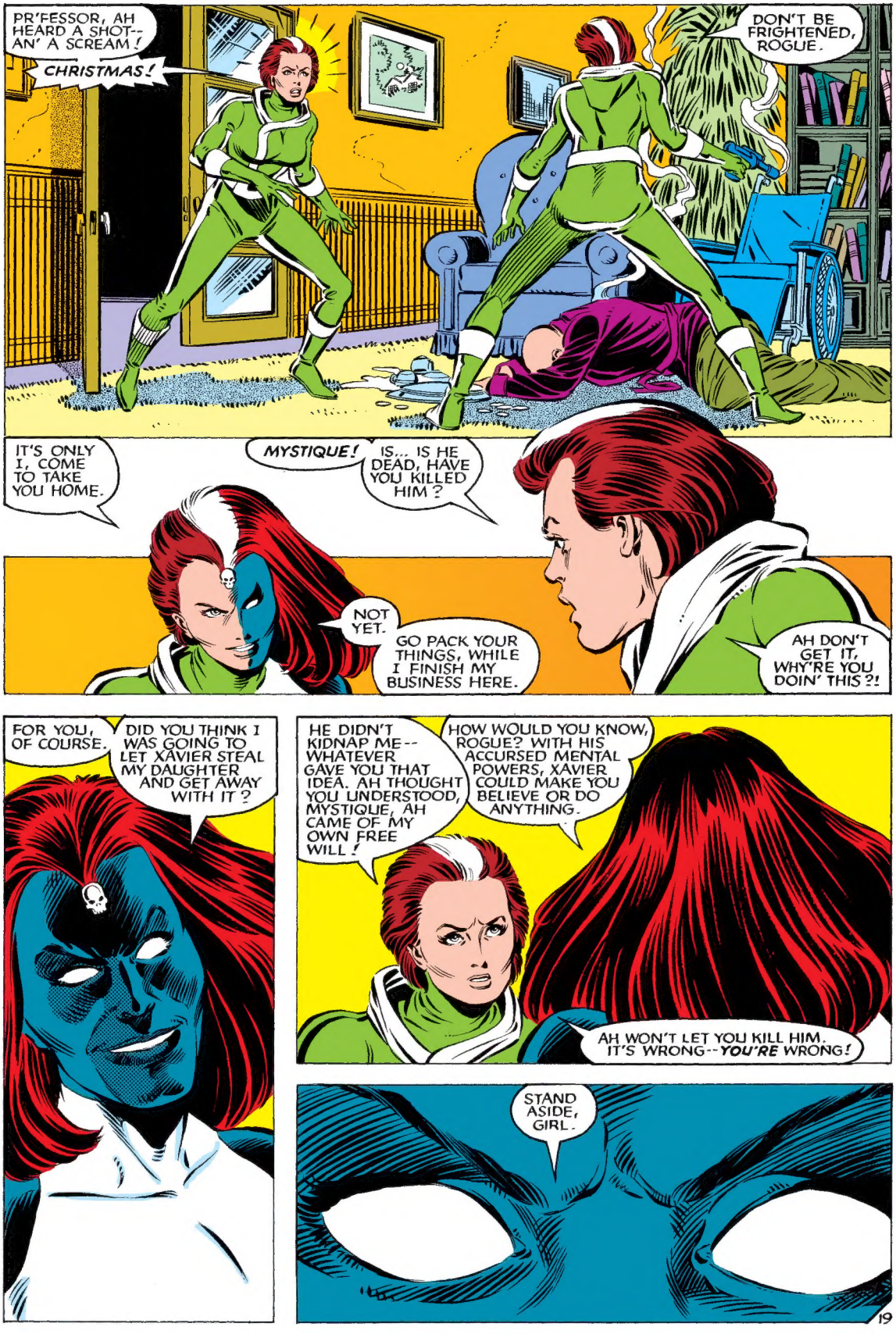

... BUT I NO LONGER BELIEVE THAT'S THE CASE. I'VE ENCOUNTERED THIS JAMMING PATTERN BEFORE-- BUT WHERE, WHEN?!
YOU LOOK PRETTY RAGGED, PROFESSOR.
AH BROUGHT YOU SOME HERB TEA.
THAT'S VERY KIND, ROGUE, THANK YOU.

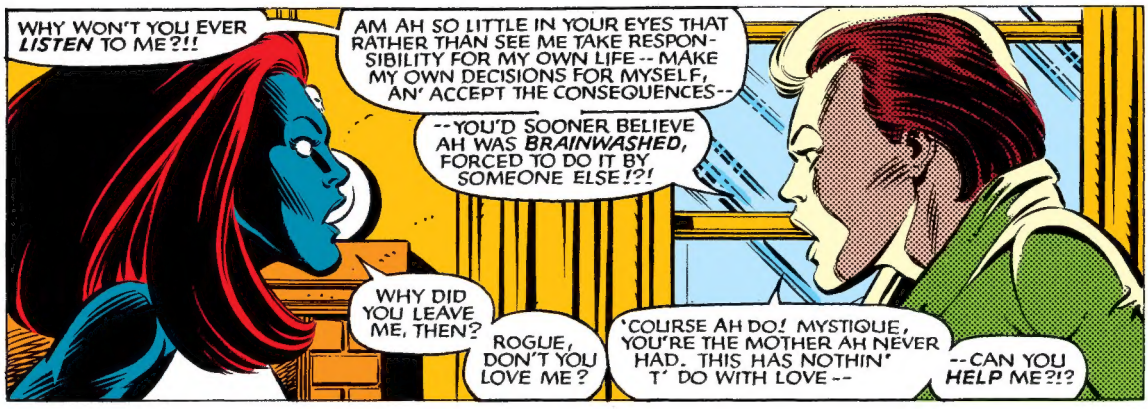
MAH PLEASURE, SIR. ANYTHING ELSE AH CAN DO?
NOT AT THE MOMENT.
WAIT -- NO WONDER THE PATTERN FEELS FAMILIAR. IT WAS MONTHS AGO, IN WASHINGTON! MYSTIQUE USED IT TO INHIBIT MY PSI-PROBES...
... SO SHE COULD GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO ME TO...


SHZAK!

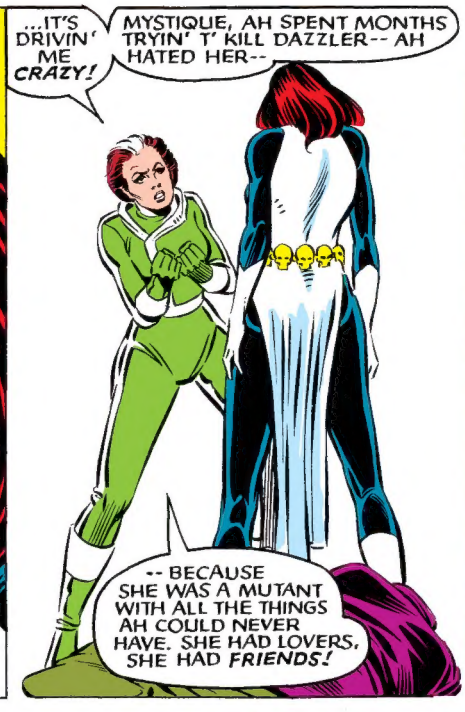

ARRRGH!

INCREDIBLE. AT THE VERY LAST INSTANT, HE SENSED MY ATTACK. DESPITE MY PSIONIC SCRAMBLER, HE WAS ABLE TO MAKE ME SHIFT MY AIM...
... SO THAT A SHOT MEANT TO KILL ONLY WOUNDED HIM.
HE'S UNCONSCIOUS NOW, THOUGH. QUITE HELPLESS.


PR'FESSOR, AH HEARD A SHOT-- AN' A SCREAM!
CHRISTMAS!
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, ROGUE.
IT'S ONLY I, COME TO TAKE YOU HOME.
MYSTIQUE!
IS... IS HE DEAD, HAVE YOU KILLED HIM?
NOT YET.
GO PACK YOUR THINGS, WHILE I FINISH MY BUSINESS HERE.
AH DON'T GET IT, WHY'RE YOU DOIN' THIS?!
FOR YOU, OF COURSE.
DID YOU THINK I WAS GOING TO LET XAVIER STEAL MY DAUGHTER AND GET AWAY WITH IT?
HE DIDN'T KIDNAP ME-- WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA. AH THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD, MYSTIQUE, AH CAME OF MY OWN FREE WILL!
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW, ROGUE? WITH HIS ACCURSED MENTAL POWERS, XAVIER COULD MAKE YOU BELIEVE OR DO ANYTHING.
AH WON'T LET YOU KILL HIM. IT'S WRONG--YOU'RE WRONG!
STAND ASIDE, GIRL.

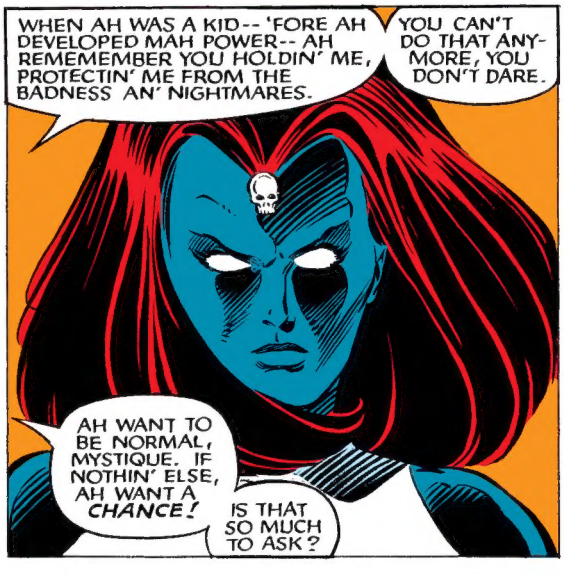

WHY WON'T YOU EVER LISTEN TO ME?!!
AM AH SO LITTLE IN YOUR EYES THAT RATHER THAN SEE ME TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN LIFE -- MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS FOR MYSELF, AN' ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES--
--YOU'D SOONER BELIEVE AH WAS BRAINWASHED, FORCED TO DO IT BY SOMEONE ELSE!?!
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME, THEN?
ROGUE, DON'T YOU LOVE ME?
'COURSE AH DO! MYSTIQUE, YOU'RE THE MOTHER AH NEVER HAD. THIS HAS NOTHIN' T' DO WITH LOVE --
--CAN YOU HELP ME?!?

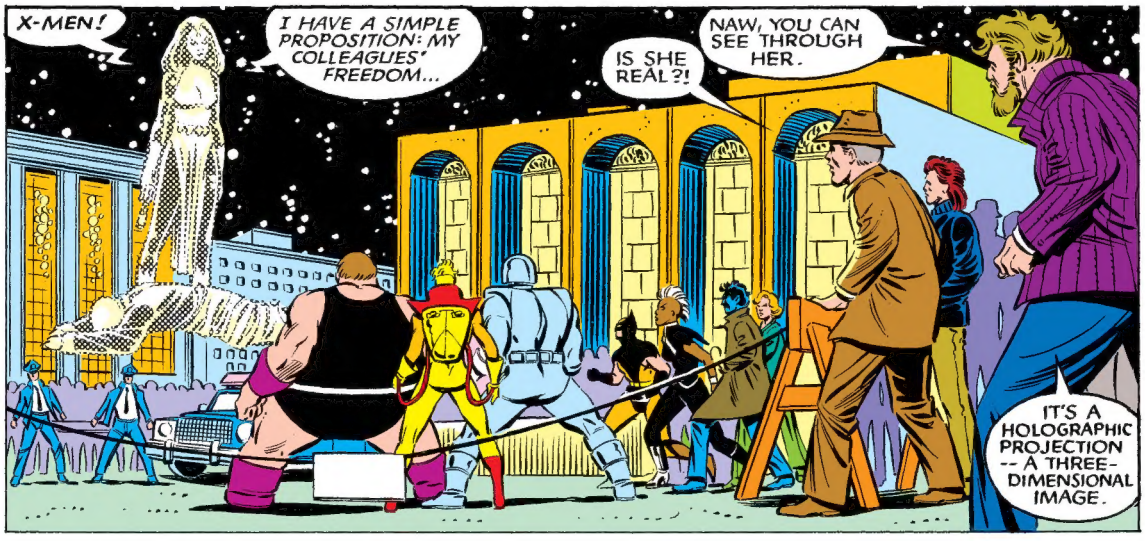
MY POWER'S OUT OF CONTROL!
AH CAN'T TOUCH YOU, TOUCH ANYONE -- B'CAUSE THE SLIGHTEST PHYSICAL CONTACT TRANSFERS THAT PERSON'S MEM'RIES AN' ABILITIES TO ME. I CAN'T HANDLE IT ANYMORE, MAMA...


...IT'S DRIVIN' ME CRAZY!
MYSTIQUE, AH SPENT MONTHS TRYIN' T' KILL DAZZLER -- AH HATED HER--
-- BECAUSE SHE WAS A MUTANT WITH ALL THE THINGS AH COULD NEVER HAVE. SHE HAD LOVERS, SHE HAD FRIENDS!

XAVIER'S MY LAST RESORT.
IF YOU TRULY LOVE ME -- IF YOU WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR ME -- YOU'LL RESPECT MY DECISION, AN' LET ME STAY.

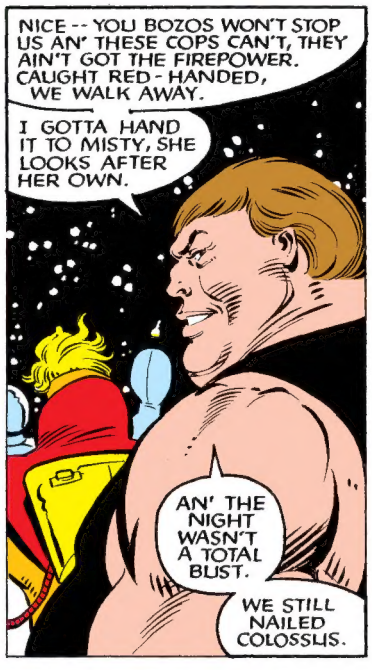
AND WHEN IT'S OVER, WHEN YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN X-MEN AND BROTHERHOOD -- HIM AND... ME -- WHAT THEN?
AT LEAST I'LL HAVE A CHOICE.
MORE'N AH GOT NOW.

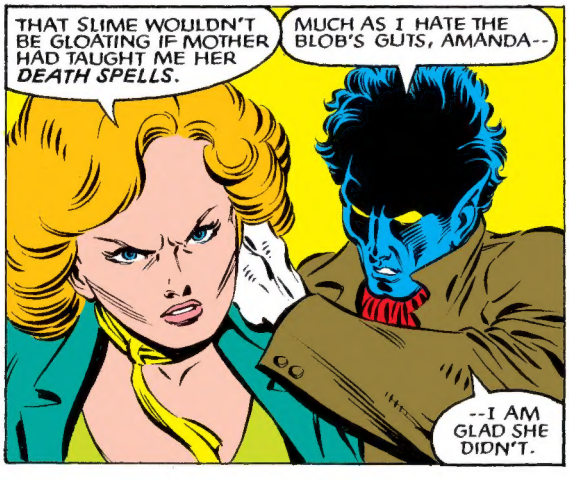

WHEN AH WAS A KID -- 'FORE AH DEVELOPED MAH POWER -- AH REMEMEMBER YOU HOLDIN' ME, PROTECTIN' ME FROM THE BADNESS AN' NIGHTMARES.
YOU CAN'T DO THAT ANYMORE, YOU DON'T DARE.
AH WANT TO BE NORMAL, MYSTIQUE. IF NOTHIN' ELSE, AH WANT A CHANCE!
IS THAT SO MUCH TO ASK?


X-MEN!
I HAVE A SIMPLE PROPOSITION: MY COLLEAGUES' FREEDOM...
IS SHE REAL?!
NAW, YOU CAN SEE THROUGH HER.
IT'S A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION -- A THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGE.

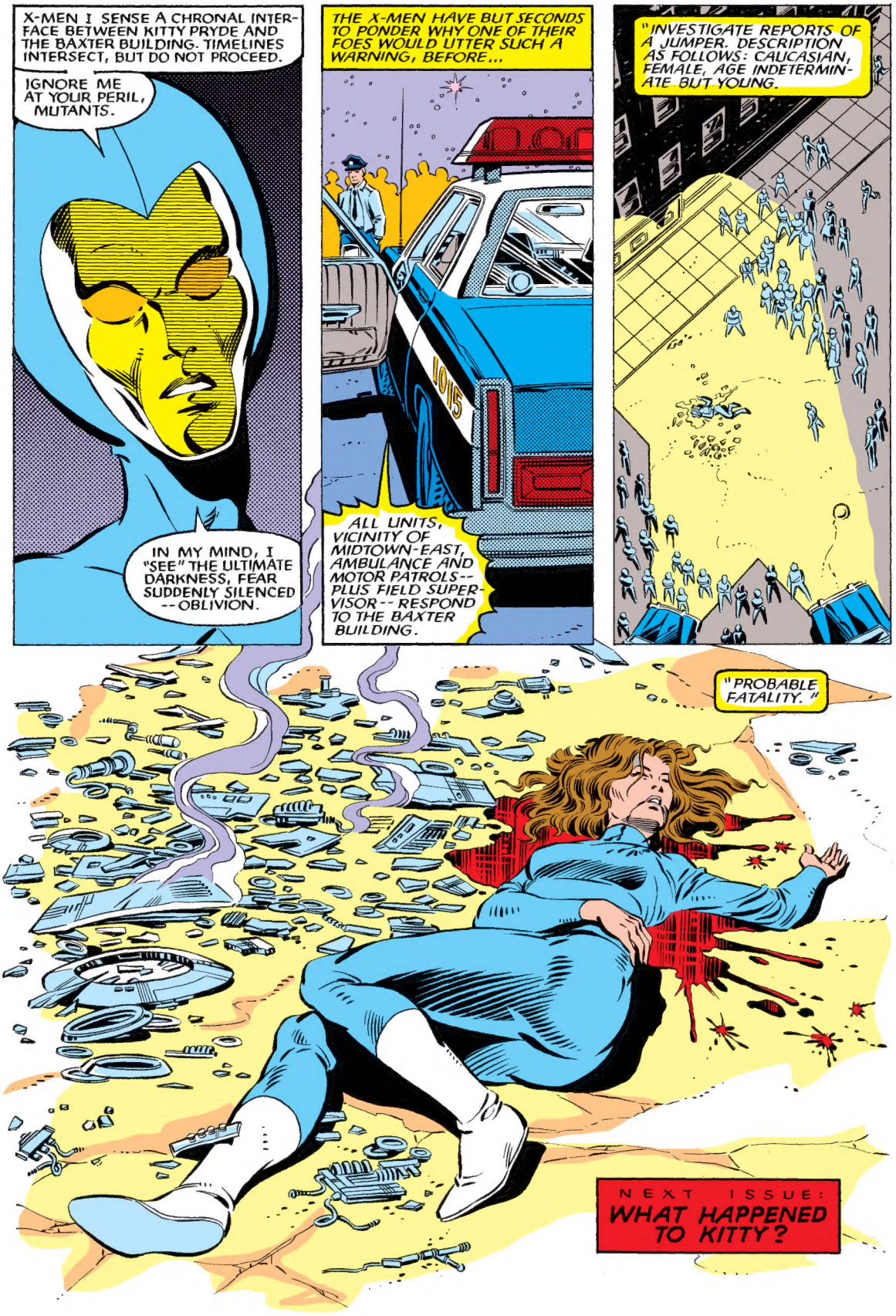
...FOR YOUR MENTOR'S LIFE.

HOW DO WE KNOW HE ISN'T ALREADY DEAD?
WHAT ALTERNATIVE HAVE WE, NIGHTCRAWLER? WE MUST TRUST HER.
AGREED, MYSTIQUE.


NICE -- YOU BOZOS WON'T STOP US AN' THESE COPS CAN'T, THEY AIN'T GOT THE FIREPOWER. CAUGHT RED-HANDED, WE WALK AWAY.
I GOTTA HAND IT TO MISTY, SHE LOOKS AFTER HER OWN.
AN' THE NIGHT WASN'T A TOTAL BUST.
WE STILL NAILED COLOSSUS.


THAT SLIME WOULDN'T BE GLOATING IF MOTHER HAD TAUGHT ME HER DEATH SPELLS.
MUCH AS I HATE THE BLOB'S GUTS, AMANDA--
--I AM GLAD SHE DIDN'T.

A WORD TO THE WISE, BLOB -- GET USED TO LOOKIN' OVER YOUR SHOULDER.
'CAUSE SOONER OR LATER, I'LL BE THERE.
DON'T EXPECT TO SEE MUCH AFTER THAT.


X-MEN I SENSE A CHRONAL INTERFACE BETWEEN KITTY PRYDE AND THE BAXTER BUILDING. TIMELINES INTERSECT, BUT DO NOT PROCEED.
IGNORE ME AT YOUR PERIL, MUTANTS.
IN MY MIND, I "SEE" THE ULTIMATE DARKNESS, FEAR SUDDENLY SILENCED --OBLIVION.
THE X-MEN HAVE BUT SECONDS TO PONDER WHY ONE OF THEIR FOES WOULD UTTER SUCH A WARNING, BEFORE...
1015
ALL UNITS, VICINITY OF MIDTOWN-EAST, AMBULANCE AND MOTOR PATROLS--PLUS FIELD SUPERVISOR--RESPOND TO THE BAXTER BUILDING.
"INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF A JUMPER. DESCRIPTION AS FOLLOWS: CAUCASIAN, FEMALE, AGE INDETERMINATE BUT YOUNG.
"PROBABLE FATALITY."
NEXT ISSUE:
WHAT HAPPENED TO KITTY?